

G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



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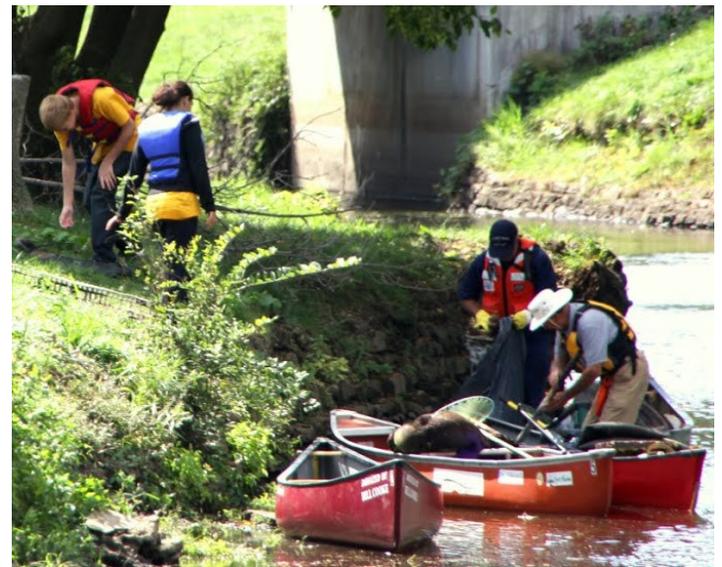
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Grand River Clean Up



The Golden Knights came out to help with the clean up effort.

Well, we did it again! This past September around 70 people came out to do what should not have been needed. We pulled trash out of the Grand River...again. You would hope that this would be a job you only need to do once or twice, but it is too much like raking the leaves in the back yard and it needs to be done every year. Those of us in Jackson County that care about the Grand River are very fortunate to have such a resource and I found it reassuring that there were so many others that seem to feel the same way. We had volunteers of all ages come out on a chilly morning to get into the water and pull out those things that did not belong there. There were road signs, barrels, television sets, chairs, bicycles, safety cones, cans and bottles to name just a few. North of town floating debris created a raft of trash trapped upstream by a fallen tree. Most people are unaware that even when you are not near the river, things still end up in the Grand.



We had crews working around most of the bridges in Jackson from the East High Street to north of town past where the Portage Drain empties into the Grand River, a distance of just around 11 river miles. We had crews put into the water at one bridge and work their way to the next bridge. With the water levels lower than normal it made it a little easier to get at some items that were inaccessible in years past. There were a couple sections of river that we had not had crews walking in for many years. In my opinion this may have been one of GREAT's best clean ups ever.

I can not say thank you enough to all of the people that came out to help on this effort. From the local businesses that contributed food and drink, transported crews to and from their work sites, provided dumpsters, the city staff who picked up our piles of trash afterwards, the folks that organized and supervised the crews and most important the volunteers who got into the water and did the hard work. Thank you!

Don Nelson

Beautiful Days, Beautiful Paddles!



August event Paddlers witnessed this mass of huge beautiful lotus plants on Kent Lake, in Oakland County. Jamie and Cathy Myles of Great Lakes Paddlers (GLP) hosted the event.



Our August paddle included car pooling to Kent Lake. The lotus flowers were the sight to see. They began to grow on Kent Lake approximately 6 years ago. This is the farthest north you will see them bloom. They cover a distant corner of Kent Lake at Kensington Metropark. They have not expanded so far, so park officials are allowing them to remain at this time.

With the threat of an approaching big storm system, the date of October paddle was rescheduled that morning for the following Sunday. As it turned out, the system went north. Instead of gray clouds, the following Sunday was a beautiful day with a warming sun, which brightly lit up the fall foliage on the 5.5 mile route from Maple Grove Road bridge at the DNR Access to South State Road, adjacent to the US 127 bridge north of Jackson.

Right: On the October paddle Abby Bentle leads as Michelle Cherne turns to navigate around a fallen tree. Michelle says, "One of the best things about my first year with GREAT was meeting new people who shared my interest in travel, nature and kayaking! I can't wait to start next year's paddling!"

Because of the exceptionally low water from a season of drought, the river was very low. A low river has more obstructions coming into play from the fallen trees, so GREAT volunteers started chain saw operations a month in advance. By the time it was complete, 60 hours of work had been done by six individuals, bringing the total hours to 120 of chain cutting for GREAT 2012 paddle events. By launch time, the river level from a recent rain was up slightly higher the last chain saw cutting, so the boats of the thirty five paddlers nicely slid over those big logs too big and deep to cut. However as often is the case paddling the Grand River Headwaters in Jackson County, there was still plenty of zigzagging to locate the paths cut through the jams and fallen trees.

The route goes through mainly areas of mature hardwood forests with few buildings. Although as our other monthly Sunday paddles, this was not a clean-up paddle event per say, but one television and large plastic stuffed chair, and several plastic and glass bottles were picked up by various paddlers to improve its natural look. Unfortunately, about half dozen tires were unable to be removed. GREAT member, Michelle Cherne commented, "This trip gave us a very clear indication of just how low our water level was this year. We could see the high water marks on the bank trees, and the opportunity to pull refuse from the lower river to keep our environment safer and healthier was an expected benefit of a very dry year."

After taking out, several went to the Roadhouse Restaurant on Lansing Avenue to eat and socialize.

Thank you to the River Debris Removal Team: Jim Seitz, Jack Ripstra, Don Nelson, Bill Kantor, Rod Monasmith, Ken Mangus, Rick Berry and Kenny Price!

Hope to see you the river in 2013!

Jim Seitz



Winter Paddling



“What good is the warmth of summer, without the cold of winter to give it sweetness.” Steinbeck.

Paddling in winter can be a most sublime affair. Is she nuts? I hear you wondering aloud! Of course she is, but that doesn't change the fact that we live in a “Water, Winter Wonderland”, and our creeks and streams in Jackson County make for some gorgeous scenery. Paddling in the winter is no more serious an endeavor than skiing, snowmobiling or sledding. Proper planning and sensible behavior can make for a wonderful, wintery outing.

Of course one must be careful not to tip over in one's canoe or kayak. If open water is available, do not paddle out further from shore than one can swim (which is undoubtedly half as far as you think it is!). This is especially important if you are not familiar or able to reenter your boat in open water after a capsize. In the event you go for a swim in the winter, and this author has found herself in the water every month of the year but February, you must be certain to have along dry clothes in a dry bag. It is imperative that you change out of the wet clothing and into the dry and get yourself warmed up as fast as possible or ASP as Jim Seitz would say.

Dry suits and wet suits are options for clothing that may keep you safe and warm. Like it sounds, dry suits will keep you dry in the water. They have latex gaskets around the wrists, neck and ankles in order to keep cold water out.

They tend to be expensive, but if you plan to paddle year 'round, as the author does, it would be an excellent investment. Wet suits are better suited to warmer weather, but can also be used to keep in your warmth in cold weather. In any case, dress for the water temperature and extended immersion. Dress in layers as needed. Hypothermia can sap your strength and make you unable to take care of yourself when you need it the most. Above all, wear your life jacket, as it will help maintain your core temperature.

Paddle with a buddy. In the event of a problem, someone can always go for help. The good news is our rivers are narrow and shallow. Worse comes to worse, you walk over to the side and climb out. Be careful of sweepers (limbs that cross the stream and can trap a boat or paddler) and other obstacles. Bring your cell phone in a dry bag, or even better, your SPOT personal locator system. Make sure someone knows where you are and when you are supposed to be back (float plan).

The scenery is unbelievable, the quiet in snow is amazing and our beautiful, and Pure Michigan is well worth at least one winter paddle a year. I hope you will try it.

Kathy Kulchinski



How Jackson Michigan got its GPS Designation



Downtown Jackson in the early 1900's

The Federal Government formed the U.S. Lake Survey Department in 1841. Their job was to “aid the increasing numbers of westward migrants“. They were charged with the job of obtaining latitudes and longitudes for all the Great Lakes and to make maps for the people moving westward. “The positions of many points were needed to check the accumulation of errors in ordinary topographical work, and to serve as fixed points in the projections of the charts of the lakes.”

“Since the Earth revolves uniformly on its axis, the difference of longitude is measured by the time required for a star to pass from the meridian of one station (a line from straight to north and south) to that of another, or the difference of longitude is the difference of local time. The invention of the electric telegraph by Samuel Morse in 1844, was destined to start new era in longitude determination. Sears Walker devised the method of “star signals“. The difference of longitude between two stations being the time required for a star to pass from the meridian of the eastern station to that of the western station.”

“On August 17, 1875, Lt. T.N. Bailey of the U. S. Coast Survey made the first measurements in Jackson. Several points were to be determined in downtown Jackson with one being the Observatory. Their first fixed point was the intersection of the axes of Main & Jackson streets. (Main Street was renamed to Michigan Avenue on January 19, 1924.) Twenty five pairs of stars were observed on the 17 of August, 1875 and another 25 stars were observed on August 22, 1875.

By calculations the center of Main Street where it crossed Jackson Street was determined to be latitude 42 degrees, 14 minutes, 49.40 seconds. Longitude determinations began August 28 and August 30, 1875 using a Pistor & Martins astronomical transit no. 2 and a meantime chronometer. Lt. Bailey using the newly invented Telegraph found the observed time difference between Detroit and Jackson was 5 min 25.72 seconds. Thus the Longitude west of Greenwich England for the intersection of Main and Jackson was calculated to be 84 degrees 24 minutes, 29.96 seconds. Due to a transcription error the Longitude was recorded as being 84 degrees 24 minutes, 29.85 seconds.

So it was determined in 1875 that latitude for the City of Jackson was 42 degrees, 14 minutes , 49.40 seconds and that the Longitude was 84 degrees, 24 minutes and 29.96 seconds.

“On the northwest corner of what is now Michigan Avenue and Jackson Street, sits the small “Blackman Park“. At the back is an old brick building. To its south is a sidewalk that runs east-west in a small stone lined hollow about 12 ½ feet south of the sidewalk is buried the Longitude stone. It measures 16 x 20 inches at the surface. The stone was brought from Monroe by horse and buggy to mark the official spot. That stone simply marks the spot where the first official measurements of where Jackson was at or rather points in Jackson, and it now lays somewhat alone and forgotten.”

If any of the readers know where the stone is, please let me know.

All information for this article was from the book Jackson Longitude Stone by Brian D. Ripley and is available at the Jackson Carnegie Library.

Kenny Price



Know Your Paddling Rights

Paddlers should know what the Michigan law is when out on the waters. GREAT faced such a challenge for a recent paddle, but local law enforcement offered us guidance and protection to avoid intimidation.

Most waterways in Michigan are regarded belonging to the public and therefore paddlers have the right to be on it, regardless of riparian ownership. However law says it must be “navigable” to be regarded as public. The DEQ says all inland water is navigable unless a court has said in some case it is not. Courts base the navigability test on if the water in the past has been used for commercial navigation or logging. Where this can not be proved, in some case land owners have been able to have their water restricted to just their boating use, but this is rare.

Paddlers can put in or take-out at bridges and other places within thirty three (33) feet of the center of the road as this is the state’s right of way and adjacent landowners can not restrict your use there. It is generally ok to park for put-in/take-out with this area, but law enforcement can ticket vehicles left there for long periods of time such as while paddling. Beware, as some neighboring land owners might report such occurrences to the police.

What if a paddler comes across a low bridge, other man-made or natural obstruction (fallen tree, dangerous water, etc.) which makes it impossible to proceed? The Michigan Recreation Trespass Act gives paddlers, fishermen, creek walkers, and others the right to go around it on the adjacent private land, but the route has to be only what is needed, not including anything beyond. The DEQ today requires new private owner bridges in areas where there is public access to the river to be constructed high enough for paddlers to go under within typical river levels This requirement would apply to the rebuild of an existing bridge if it didn’t allow for passage of paddlers in its current configuration.

Of course paddlers and others can trespass on private land in emergency (life threatening) situations. It is also wise for paddlers to treat riparian landowners and others on the waterway with as much respect as possible. Often these parties like to see such activity and often will go out of their way to assist as needed.

Jim Seitz

Snowy Egret

This bird is a member of the Heron family. While sightings are not uncommon in Michigan, it is not a location of their breeding. It is a location for their post-breeding activities. They are typically 24 inches tall and weigh about 8 pounds. They nest in colonies. Nest building is a paired activity with the male searching and bringing in the supplies and the female completing the constructions. Nests are usually built in trees about 7 foot up. The crudeness of their nests has scientists to believe that this bird is one of the lower forms in the scale of bird life. Females usually lay 3-5 bluish-green, oval eggs that are that are incubated by both adults for about 3 weeks. The young fledge in 30 days, venturing out on the limbs and taking on their own life.

They feed on crustaceans, fish and insects. The stalk their prey, standing still in the water waiting for the chance to snatch them in their black bill. They will also eat insects that may have been stirred up in the nearby brush.

The population was dangerously depleted in the 1800 – early 1900’s as hunters caught them for their plumes used on women’s hats. They have rebounded and are no longer endangered due to being protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act in the USA.

They can be found in marshes, swamps and ponds. Here in Jackson, one was sited on the Grand River, near the Jackson Water Treatment plant.

It winters they will migrate from California south to South America on the west coast and from Virginia south to the West Indies on the east coast.

http://identify.whatbird.com/obj/48/overview/Snowy_Egret.aspx This website will give you the chance to listen to their call.

Helen Burnett



Kayak Donations



Five kayaks have been donated to GREAT ranging from 10' 2" to 12'4". All boats are roto-molded plastic, which wears very well. GREAT member, Madeline Lee, donated a 12 foot Heritage Alpha 12 and the Great Lakes Paddlers (GLP) of Washtenaw, Wayne, Oakland and Macomb County areas, donated four Walden kayaks: Voyageur (10' 1"), Experience (10'2"), Adirondack (11'7"), and Vista (12'4"). All boats are in near brand new condition.

GREAT now has 13 kayaks, for 14 paddlers as one boat is a tandem. These boats now nearly fill up the kayak trailer leaving room on top for only one canoe or a long kayak. We are very thankful for additional kayaks as in the past, GREAT often has not been able to meet all the kayak requests at our paddling events.

Jim Seitz



Kayaks loaded on GREAT's boat trailer ready for the next outing in April

The Year in Review



We hope that you were able to join us for one of our events this past year. As we look forward to the new year, we ask for your continued support in the form of memberships and/or donations so that we may continue our work promoting good stewardship of the Grand River Watershed.

May you all enjoy good health and happiness this holiday season!



The D.J. Angus River Trip



The Michigan Water Environment Association's (the State association of the Water Environment Federation) Lab Practices committee, in an effort to provide an incubator for new topics to present at their annual Spring seminar, hosted an event on the D.J. Angus water research vessel, which included participants from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ), Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT- from Jackson), West Michigan Environmental Action Council (WMEAC), and the Grand Rapids, Jackson, Battle Creek and Lansing Wastewater Treatment plants as well as a student/intern from Grand Valley State University.



The DJ Angus, a Grand Valley State University research vessel, routinely takes students and other groups from their dock in Grand Haven along the Grand River and out into Lake Michigan. While aboard the Angus, students collect samples from Spring Lake and Lake Michigan, conduct on-board water quality tests and compare the results. The instructors aboard the DJ Angus facilitate the collection and analysis, all while educating the group about watershed issues.

On July 22, 2011, while conducting our sampling and analyses, questions arose about other sampling events that might be occurring along the

Grand River. Just two days prior to that excursion, the Grand Rapids and East Lansing Wastewater Treatment Plants had conducted routine sampling of the Grand River and some of its tributaries, including the Red Cedar River. Could a coordinated effort to collect samples on a single day along the Grand River and its tributaries paint a bigger picture of the water quality of Michigan's longest river?

A sampling event took place on October 12, 2011 to help answer that question. In a coordinated effort samples were collected and analyzed by local wastewater treatment plants from the headwaters of the Grand River in Jackson to the mouth at Lake Michigan. Many of the tributaries along the way were included. Some local school groups participated as well. The results were compiled for a snapshot of the water quality along the Grand River.

The news was good. The testing that was completed on all Grand River samples included a record of weather conditions, water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, biochemical oxygen demand 5 , total suspended solids, turbidity, fecal coliform, chloride, conductivity, total phosphorus, ammonia, and metals: chromium, copper, iron, nickel, silver, zinc, cadmium, lead, arsenic, selenium, molybdenum, manganese and calcium. In the Grand Rapids area samples, testing also included nitrite, nitrate and hardness. In almost all samples, the results were as expected or better than expected for surface water quality and in comparison with wastewater treatment plant effluent discharge limits and ranges. It is hoped, by all parties involved, that more Grand River sampling days, reaching into more areas of the Grand River watershed, will happen in the future.

The MWEA Lab Practices Committee hosted another field trip on the DJ Angus ship on July 11, 2013 with an even bigger turnout from even more diverse environmental groups. If you are interested in coming along on another one of these field trips or would like to learn more about the Grand River sampling day data, please contact Mary Lenardson, GREAT Board member and Chemist/Lab Supervisor at City of Jackson Wastewater Treatment Plant at 517-788-4075.

Mary Lenardson

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