

G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team



P.O. Box 223, Jackson, Michigan 49204

Website: www.great-mi.org

517-416-4234

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March 2016

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How you can join GREAT

Contact information is on page 8 to Mail, Email, Website, Facebook or Phone

Send \$15 individual membership
\$25 family membership or
\$100 for sponsor membership

Annual Meeting Speaker to Talk about Wetlands

By Jim Seitz

Aleta Daniels, the Jackson County Conservation District's new program manager will speak about wetlands at GREAT's Annual Meeting, March 16th. The title of her presentation is

"Restoring the Balance: The Role of Wetlands in a Changing World". She will explain why wetlands are an important player in the changing climate and the roles they play politically, economically, aesthetically, and ecologically. MS Daniels says "We are losing our global wetlands at an alarming rate. Whether we desire the land for agriculture, development, or just want to drain the water stored in the wetlands makes no difference; we lose the benefits of the wetland just the same. As a global community, we are starting to understand just how important wetlands are for our planet".

Growing up in the Petoskey area of Northern Michigan, Aleta developed a passion for skiing, swimming, hiking, camping, and horseback riding. Aleta received a BS Zoology from Michigan State University, with a concentration in ecology, evolution, and organismal biology. She continued her education at Michigan Technology University to receive a MS



in Applied Ecology. Her thesis was about how climate change might impact variables such as water height and plant type, and how those variables may or may not impact carbon storage abilities to be productive.

Recently, Aleta purchased a house in Grass Lake, bringing her horses to the property. In addition to her JCCD job,

Continued on page 2

JAOC Earth Day
Sat., April 23 1-4pm

First Paddle
Sun., April 17 at Noon

Attend Quiet Water Symposium on March 5th!

With over 2,000 attendees, the annual 20 year old Quiet Water Symposium in East Lansing is one of the largest events in the nation for non-motorized recreation. As in the recent past, the event will again be held at the MSU Pavilion for Livestock and Agricultural Education (Mt. Hope and Farm Lane Roads), Saturday March 5th from 9:30 AM-5 PM. Admission is: adults \$10.00; students (with ID) \$5.00; and under 12 free.

The Symposium has a wide range of exhibits on the show floor of: clubs; nature centers, environmental organizations; government conservation, recreational, and environmental agencies; water-

shed groups; outfitters; liveries; hiking, biking, and water trails organizations; outdoor oriented retailers; and handcrafted and historic watercraft. As in the past several years, GREAT will have a booth.

Visitors will find presentations by world famous authors, photographers, and expedition travelers. Other presentations cover skills, safety, and local and distant destinations. There are also some presentations on bicycling, sailing, diving, and history.

The event has some activities for children, drawings for prizes, and food for purchase is available. Given the event is near us, is easy to run into people you know. If you attend once, you will likely become a regular!

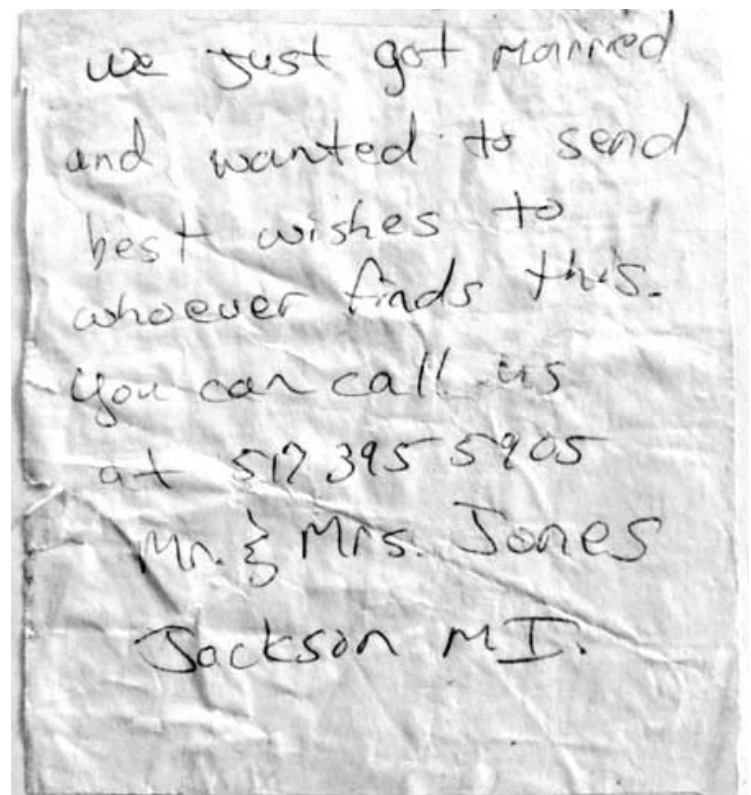
Annual meeting speaker, continued from pg. 1

Aleta splits her time as a Macomb Community College and Jackson College adjunct instructor, teaching classes on Sustainability, Earth Science, and Biology. Her responsibilities at the Jackson County Conservation office are coordination of the Adopt-A-Stream and Hunter Access programs and overseeing several district projects such as recycling and education.

ANNUAL DINNER

When: Wednesday, March 16th;
Cocktails 6:00 pm - Food 6:30 pm
Meeting begins at 7:00 pm
Where: Steve's Ranch,
(311 Louis Glick, downtown Jackson)
Dinner: \$13.00 charge, payable at the door.

Attendees must RSVP for food:
517-416-4234 or grand@great-mi.org
by Monday, March 14th
Speaker: Aleta Daniels "Restoring the Balance: The Role of Wetlands in a Changing World"



Do you you know this phone number?

Found by the Jr. ROTC Student Cadets in a glass bottle recovered from the river at GREAT's Annual Grand River Clean-up 9-12-2015. When the phone number was dialed the message was "phone number is no longer in service"

Adopt-a-stream program finds Stoneflies

By John Minar

“Clean water has bugs in it” according to entomologist Riley Nelson, a Brigham Young University professor of biology. If one seeks a clean stream, or lake, find the bugs. Specifically two families of insects (Capniidae and Taeniopterygidae) commonly known stone flies, emerge during the winter. Adults come out from the water in winter and are often found walking around on the snow. Mature stone flies range in size from less than 1/4 of an inch as large as one inch, depending on the species. These particular “bugs” are intolerant of pollution and their presence indicates that portions of the Grand River are healthy.



There are about 3,500 species found all over the world, with the exception of Antarctica, and all species are intolerant of water pollution. Like a canary in a coal mine, the presence of stoneflies in water are an indicator of good or excellent water quality. This explains the Stonefly Hunt conducted by the Jackson County Conservation District (JCCD) Adopt-a-stream program.

Aleta Daniels of JCCD organized several teams of hunters for the winter hunt January 23, 2016 which was attended by several GREAT members. This is conducted



GREAT volunteers, Jim Seitz, Emilee Minar and Mary Lenardson.

each spring, fall and winter at specific locations in Jackson County and results are monitored year to year for population changes. Dramatic decreases in stonefly populations indicate the need for further water quality analysis. Results of the latest findings were not available at press time.

If you are interested in learning more about our local water quality please accept this invitation to join us for the spring hunt. Further information can be found at the Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District on the web <https://jswcd.org/> or contact Aleta Daniels at 517-784-2800 extension 208.

Building Fund Update

November 2015, the GREAT board began a solicitation campaign to raise funds for construction of a building on our recently acquired land. This building will be used to store GREAT's canoes, kayaks, boat trailers, river clean-up equipment as well as a staging site for GREAT's educational and environmental programs.

GREAT spent \$9,441 last fall for grading and fill for road access and parking, and the building's foundation and concrete floor. To date, 35 members have donated a total of \$13,650 for the \$42,000 project (Thank you!).

The GREAT board plans to contribute more funds from our savings, but we still will need about \$15,000 of “outside” funds.

Building Fund contributions may be sent to: GREAT, PO Box 223, Jackson, MI 49204 or at GREAT's web site: <http://great-mi.org/Membership2.htm>.

GREAT Adopts Goals for 2016

1. Finish fund raising for GREAT's building construction
2. Assist Jackson County to develop a paddle trail master plan
3. Include celebration of GREAT's 25th anniversary as part of designated 2016 events

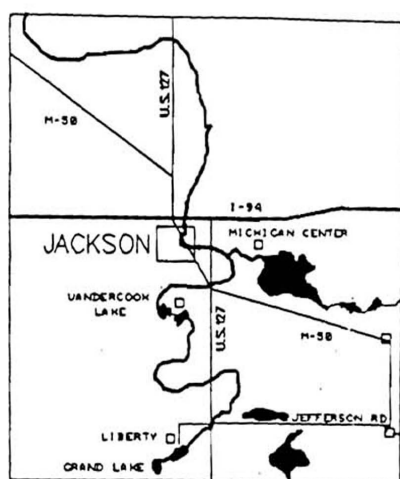
Grand River Environmental

This year GREAT is celebrating 25 years as an organization dedicated to improvement of the environment and recreation of the local Grand

River. Meetings to start such an organization were held after the Grand River Expedition 1990, the first of the every ten year paddles of the

Grand River from Jackson County to Grand Haven on Lake Michigan. Beginning in January of 1991, the Grand River Environmental Action

GREAT's first newsletter published in 1991



"Jackson's Grand Beginnings"

History of G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Expo '90 in August gave rise to a grass roots movement. A group of Grand River enthusiasts gathered to discuss how to protect and beautify our own Jackson County portion of the Grand River.

As of January 30, 1991, three public meetings have been held, a Board of Directors appointed, and committees formed for exciting future plans.

Take the plunge. Join our efforts to protect one of our most valuable and beautiful Jackson County resources - our Grand River.

SHORT TERM GOALS

- ☆ Clean up and identify river access points from Liberty to northern Jackson County line.
- ☆ Organize a county wide Grand River clean-up in early June.
- ☆ Develop public awareness and consciousness about our Grand.
- ☆ Create a recreational map system, identifying access points, wildlife areas, and canoeing potential.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marge and Dave Hanselman	Clarklake
John and Jodi Riggs	Jackson
Nancy Lapinski	Jackson
John and Joan Bunkers	Somerset
George Hunt	Jackson
Barry Elder	Jackson
Jeff Jones	Jackson

AREA GROUPS REPRESENTED

Jackson Audubon Society
Land O'Lakes Boy Scouts
Columbia Neighborhood Girl Scouts
The Exponent - Brooklyn
City of Jackson Forester
Jackson High School
Miller Elementary - Cement City
Dahlem Environmental Education Center
MUCC Wetland Watch
Western Michigan Environmental Action Council
Expo '90 Members
Sports Connection
River-Front Residents
Jackson County Outdoor Club

LONG TERM GOALS

- ☆ Act as "watch-dog" environmentalists to protect the Jackson County watershed, the river and its wetlands.
- ☆ Develop funding sources from grants and community involvement.
- ☆ Create a public information program for area groups.
- ☆ Seek means and funding to remove the cap off the Grand River and implement the 1976 City of Jackson Grand River Park Plan.



Happy 25th Birthday GREAT!!

Action Team Celebrates 25 Years!

Team (GREAT) is likely the oldest friends of river type organization in the State of Michigan. Since that time: GREAT has had its member-

ship grow from a few dozen to a peak of 165 in 2010; offered 132 public paddle trips; removed thousands of tons of trash from

the Grand River; and has been given state wide and local recognition awards. Below is GREAT's first newsletter (1991).

YES! I would like to take the plunge and get involved with G.R.E.A.T.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

I can help with:

River Clean-Up (June 1)
Community Organizing
Public Speaking
Add me to mailing list
Phoning or mailing
Research
Sponsoring part of Clean-Up Day
Donate clean-up materials

Clip and send to:

G.R.E.A.T.
3513 Reed Road
Clarklake, Michigan 49234

or contact:
Jodi Riggs - 787-8772

Please sign up my family as members
of G.R.E.A.T. \$10 a year _____

Board of Directors meeting every third Wednesday,
7:00 pm. Public meetings with speakers every
fourth Wednesday, 7:00 pm. Watch for notices in
Cit. Pat. and the Exponent for locations.

"BE G.R.E.A.T.!!!"



GRAND RIVER WATERSHED FACTS

- ★ The Grand River watershed covers 5,572 square miles.
- ★ The river is 260 miles long and is Michigan's longest river.
- ★ The sources of the Grand River are springs in Grand Lake, south of the Liberty Mill Pond and the wetlands feeding into Little Wolf Lake.
- ★ The Grand River flows into Lake Michigan in Grand Haven, port for ocean going ships.
- ★ The watershed includes all or parts of 19 counties and 64 cities.
- ★ The Grand River is fed by 7 large tributaries - the Portage, Red Cedar, Looking Glass, Maple, flat, Thornapple, Rouge Rivers and 150 smaller ones.

WHAT YOU CAN DO FOR THE GRAND RIVER

- ★ Landscape your property to temporarily hold rainwater.
- ★ Plant and protect vegetation on the slopes of the stream / river banks to prevent erosion.
- ★ Install a water saver in the shower and toilet tank. Don't run water unnecessarily.
- ★ Keep a litter watch for our rivers and roads. Rivers are not dumps!
- ★ Join G.R.E.A.T.!!

Adapted from WMEAC material

1991

THE GRAND RIVER ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION TEAM G.R.E.A.T.

Jackson's Grand Beginnings



G.R.E.A.T.



Tackling Invasives on GREAT's property

By Ellen Rathbone

It was a sunny but chilly November 14th morning out in Birdland, as over a dozen hardy volunteers gathered to start the battle against invasive plant species on GREAT's property.

Earlier, GREAT had requested Dahlem's Stewardship Coordinator, Gary Siegrist, help them assess the property they had finally acquired in 2013 from a land trade with the state of Michigan. The 25 acres border the Grand River and include part of the original riverbed before engineers straightened it out in 1920. Over the years, as is common across the majority of the land in this part of Michigan, aggressively growing non-native plants have made significant inroads on the property, resulting in decreased diversity of native plants and wildlife. Because part of GREAT's mission is to work toward the betterment of the environment, the board decided that it would strive to restore their property to conditions similar to historic record. The first stage of this massive undertaking was determining the plant community's current in situation and develop a restoration plan.

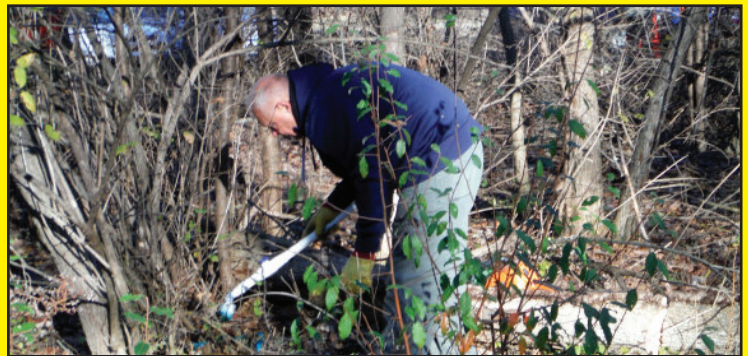
Gary's assessment of the property showed indeed it was quite over-run with some of the most aggressive of the invasive non-native plants: buckthorn, autumn olive, garlic mustard, dame's rocket, and honeysuckle. He recommended that GREAT start to organize invasive species removal projects, knowing it will take months, if not years, to get the property cleared.

When tackling a major invasive species removal project like this, manpower is the key. It is slow, it is very time-consuming, but it the most effective way. Volunteers, armed with chainsaws, hand saws, and loppers must go through and cut down (or pull up, in the case of the herbaceous species like garlic mustard and dame's rocket) all the invasives. The cut branches, stems, trunks are dragged and stacked into piles, and the stumps are treated, within 15 minutes of cutting, with a powerful herbicide, in this case Tordon. In the "trade," this process is called cut-and-dab. Later on, the brush piles can be burned, or they can be left to provide habitat for birds and even protected species like box turtles.

So it was on this chilly morning in mid-November that volunteers, under Gary's direction, gathered for their first attempt at controlling the unwanted vegetation. Coffee and donuts were on hand, teams were formed (one or two cutters and a couple haulers who also doubled as dabbers), and starting near the location of GREAT's future boat garage, the battle began.



Leah Ropski, Kurt Lafrance and Tim Laining (L. to R.) move cut honeysuckle and buckthorn to create a habitat brush pile.



Tim Laining uses a dabber to apply a herbicide to a cut buckthorn stump



Jim Rossman chain saws through invasive honeysuckle brush.

There were about four or five teams, and they worked nearly non-stop for three or four hours, cutting, hauling, dabbing. Piles of limbs and trunks grew, soon becoming taller than the volunteers themselves. And when the crews finally took a break near noon, they could see the progress

Continued on page 7

Open board member positions

GREAT will have four open board member position starting in mid-March. Terms are two years, but one of the positions is to complete the last year of a term. Unlike many organizations of GREAT's activity level, we have no paid staff, so our board is a working board. Along with some member support, the GREAT board carries out the organization's administrative tasks. We

need to fill these positions to remain an effective organization to successfully continue our local mission. Please let us know if you are interested. Thanks!

While the content is strong, the design of GREAT's web page is getting out of date. If you have web design experience and would like to help with a new design, please let us know. Thanks!

Invasives, continued from pg. 6



Charity Steer explains how to load Dahlem's dabbers with herbicide to be applied to the stumps of cut invasive trees and brush.

they had made based on the newly created mountains of brush, but they could also see that there was a long road still ahead of them.

Invasive plant removal is a long-term process, especially in areas where the plants have been allowed to grow unchecked for decades. However, it is an important undertaking, because the re-establishment of native plants provides food for native insects, which in turn are food for native birds. Restoring habitat really is restoring the health of the land, and it spreads all the way up the food chain.

GREAT's invasive species removal project is going to continue for many years as we try to wrest control of our parcel away from the non-native plants. If you would like to volunteer some of your time and sweat equity to help with this project, please contact us at 517 416-4234 or grand@great-mi.org. We will be sure to add your name to the call list the next time we go out. In the meantime, check your own property. If you are lucky and don't have too many invasives (yet), you can get them out quickly and keep an eye peeled for future incursions. It's never too late to start!

Spring Tree Sale Jackson County Conservation District

The following trees are being offered in the spring 2016 sale: Blue Spruce, Douglas-fir, Norway Spruce, Red Pine, White Cedar, White Pine, Balsam Fir, Canadian Hemlock and American Larch. The deciduous trees and shrubs offered are American Beech, American Sycamore, Bur Oak, Red Maple, Sugar Maple, Swamp White Oak, Tulip Poplar, White birch, American Crabapple, Allegheny Serviceberry, Highbush Cranberry, Red Osier Dogwood, Washington Hawthorne and White Flowering Dogwood. The fruit trees being offered are Gale Gala Apple, Granny Smith Apple, Honeycrisp Apple, and Rock Island Fuji Apple, Blackgold and Stella Cherries, Canadian Harmony and Reliance Peaches, and Red Bartlett and Harrow Sweet Pears. Tree Sale Catalogs were mailed out in mid January and orders can be placed until March 22, 2016. If you are not on our mailing list, please call Lori at the JCCD office at 517-784-2800 x214.

THE DEADLINE FOR ORDERING 2016 SPRING TREES IS MARCH 22, 2016. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ON OUR MAILING LIST OR EMAIL LIST, PLEASE CONTACT LORI AT LORI.FITZGIBBONS@MI.NACDNET.NET.

For more information - <http://www.jacksoncd.org/treeplant-sales/>



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you have a chainsaw and a desire to help clear a path on the river so our paddlers can get through, we sure could use the help. The work falls on the same few and it would be nice to have more help. Email grand@great-mi.org to volunteer or call 517-416-4234. Thank you!

Board Meetings

The GREAT board meets on the second Wednesday of each month, with the exception of December, at 7:00 p.m. at the Summit Township Hall, 2121 Ferguson Road (across from Knights Restaurant, near the Intersection of South Jackson and Horton Roads).

Meetings are open and visitors are welcome. To be on the agenda, please contact us prior to the meeting.

Welcome New Members!

Jack Curran
Terry Scott
Trudell Auto Sales

GREAT Newsletter

Published quarterly by the
Grand River Environmental Action Team
a 501(C)(3) non-profit organization

GREAT
P.O. Box 223
Jackson, MI 49204

Email: grand@great-mi.org
Website: www.great-mi.org
Facebook: GREAT Grand River Environmental Action Team
Phone: 517-416-4234

If you wish to join or renew your membership visit: www.great-mi.org/Membership2.htm

GREAT Board

Don Lynd, President
Kenny Price, Vice President
Jim Seitz, Secretary
Jack Ripstra, Treasurer
Don Nelson, Rivermaster
Pam Brown, Director
Kurt LaFrance, Director
Mary Lenardson, Director
John Minar, Director
Jon Hoyle, Director

Special Assignments:

Louise Hefka, Publicity
Jeff Grund, Tax Statements
Barb Anderson, Historian