

G.R.E.A.T.

Grand River Environmental Action Team

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How you can
join GREAT

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

Send \$20 individual
membership
\$30 family membership
or
\$100 for sponsor
membership

GREAT Invasive Species Removal Event **Saturday, December 5th, 9:00AM - Noon**

Please join Grand River Environmental Action Team on Saturday, December 5, 2020 from 9:00AM until Noon to help remove invasive species from the GREAT Land in Blackman Township. This property consists of over 25 acres with almost a half mile of frontage on the Grand River. You can reach the property by taking Lansing Avenue North from Parnall Road for 0.7 miles, turn right on Cardinal Crest (after second gas station) to its end at Canary Lane. Turn left onto the gravel drive and you will see the large green pole barn with a red metal roof. (Approximate address is 102 Cardinal Crest, Jackson).

A 2014 study of the GREAT land identified many invasive plant species including oriental bittersweet, black locust, common buckthorn, burdock, garlic mustard, non-native honey-suckle, multiflora rose, mullein, motherwort, myrtle, common



privet, slippery elm and dame's rocket. The process to remove the invasive species is labor intensive. Chain saws and loppers are used to cut the woody plants and then they are piled up to naturally decay while providing habitat for birds, mammals and reptiles. The stems are treated with an herbicide which prevents regrowth of the invasive species.

Be sure to dress warm

for the weather as some of our past events have been cold and snowy.

We will be meeting at GREAT's pole barn and a propane heater will be available if you get too cold. There will be plenty of space for social distancing.

Hope to see you on December 5, 2020!

Please RSVP to grand@great-mi.org or call 517-416-4234

CONSIDER A YEAR-END DONATION! **HELP SUPPORT GREAT'S MISSION**

Wow, what a crazy year 2020 has been! Despite the added difficulties and many unknowns of Covid-19, GREAT was able to continue our mission in 2020 to promote the protection and preservation of our Grand River Watershed. This year more than ever we are so grateful for your support! Some 2020 highlights include: working with Upper Grand River partners to promote river accessibility and water quality, a successful Grand River clean-up in September, and at least a few Covid-safe public paddle events. Please consider a year-end gift to GREAT and help us continue our mission in 2021!

Simply go to <https://www.great-mi.org> and click on the Membership tab to make a donation and/or renew your membership.

Common Buckthorn - Identification and Control of this Invasive Species



by Cathy Jehnzen

GREAT's 25 acres along the Grand River has A LOT of Common Buckthorn, among many other invasive plants. Here are a few facts about this common invasive species: Common buckthorn is native to Eurasia and was introduced to North America in the 1880s as an ornamental plant. Its abundant fruit is dispersed by birds and it spreads rapidly, replacing native vegetation and lowering species diversity. Like many non-native shrubs, common buckthorn leafs out early in spring and retains its leaves late into fall, shading out spring wildflowers and tree seedlings. There is some evidence that common buckthorn is allelopathic, producing chemicals that inhibit the growth of other species. Buckthorn can also alter the ecosystem processes in complex ways.

Buckthorn can be most easily identified in late fall when the leaves of native vegetation are absent or have changed color; buckthorn will retain their green leaves for a much longer time.

Common buckthorn has simple, dark green oval leaves, with toothed margins and 3 to 5 pairs of prominent leaf veins, which curve as they approach the leaf tip. The leaves are alternate, but some may appear opposite. Common buckthorn twigs often have thorns at their tips, between the terminal buds. Branches are dotted with light-colored vertical raised marks. The bark is brown to gray and peels with age. The inner bark is orange. In spring, small, yellow-green, 4-petaled flowers grow in clusters of 2-6 at the base of leaves. In the fall, small, purple to black fruits ripen on female plants only.

Similar species include:

- The related invasive glossy buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) has untoothed leaves and flowers with five petals rather than four. It lacks a thorn at the tip of its branches and its terminal buds are not covered by scales. It has 8 or 9 leaf veins rather than the 3 to 5 of common buckthorn.

- The native alder-leaved buckthorn (*Rhamnus alnifolia*)

is less than 1 m (3 ft) tall and has leaves with tiny rounded teeth and 6 or 7 pairs of veins. Its flowers lack petals but have five sepals, rather than four. It often grows in fens and other wetlands.

- Dogwoods (*Cornus* spp.) have opposite leaves rather than alternate and their leaf margins are untoothed. The fruit and flowers are arranged in clusters on reddish stems. The fruit is blue or white, rather than deep purplish black.

A primary goal in controlling this species is to prevent seed production and dispersal. A variety of techniques including both mechanical and chemical controls may be most effective and should be tailored to the specific conditions on the site. It is critical to monitor the site to ensure that cut stumps or treated plants do not resprout and the seedbank is exhausted. Where abundant seed sources are present nearby, monitoring may be required indefinitely.

Although many factors should be considered for control in a specific area, GREAT has found the "Cut Stump" method of control to be effective. Usually in December or January, volunteers will use loppers, saws, and chainsaws to cut stems close to the ground. Immediately following the cut, the stump is sprayed with the ready-to-use Tordon Herbicide. In most cases, effective control of common buckthorn requires the use of herbicide. Factors that should be considered when selecting an herbicide for use on a particular site include proximity to water or wetlands, presence or absence of desirable native vegetation, potential for erosion and the effectiveness of the herbicide under consideration on common buckthorn. Because buckthorn typically remains green much later than many native species, late fall treatment may minimize damage to desirable plants.

More complete information of identification and control of Common Buckthorn can be found at this address:
https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/Common_Buckthorn

ANNUAL GRAND RIVER CLEAN UP



PART OF THE ROTC CREW AT STONEGATE FARMS SUBDIVISION



THE TRASH AND TIRES REMOVED FROM THE GRAND RIVER



A CANOE FULL OF TRASH



THE JR ROTC CLEANUP CREW

The morning of September 12, 2020 started out at 52° but by early afternoon it reached a very comfortable 74° with only a slight breeze and no precipitation. An energetic group of 41 volunteers, including 22 from the Junior ROTC Program made this year's Grand River Cleanup a success.

This year the cleanup began and ended at R.A. Greene Park due to the Covid-19 virus. The volunteers split into four groups, paddling both upstream and downstream from the park, walking the park grounds and driving to Stonegate

Farms Subdivision.

Depending on water depths in the river, these teams would wade in river using the canoes as garbage barges or paddle the canoes while placing the collected trash around themselves in the canoes. A roll-off container generously donated by Emmons Service Inc. was strategically placed along the bank of the river where the trash and debris picked up by the canoeing and walking teams was deposited.

Over 2.8 miles of the Grand River was cleaned from the I-94 downstream to

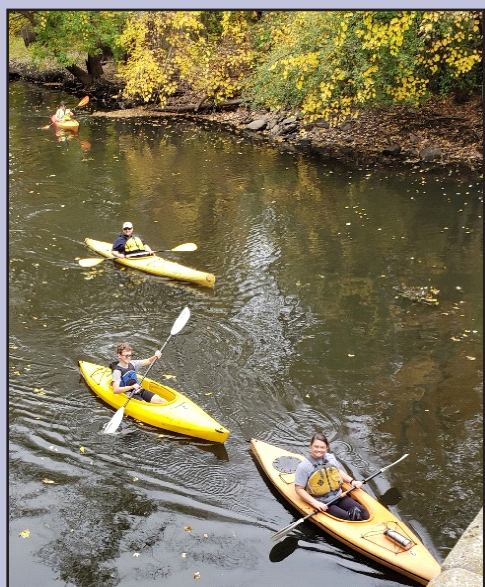
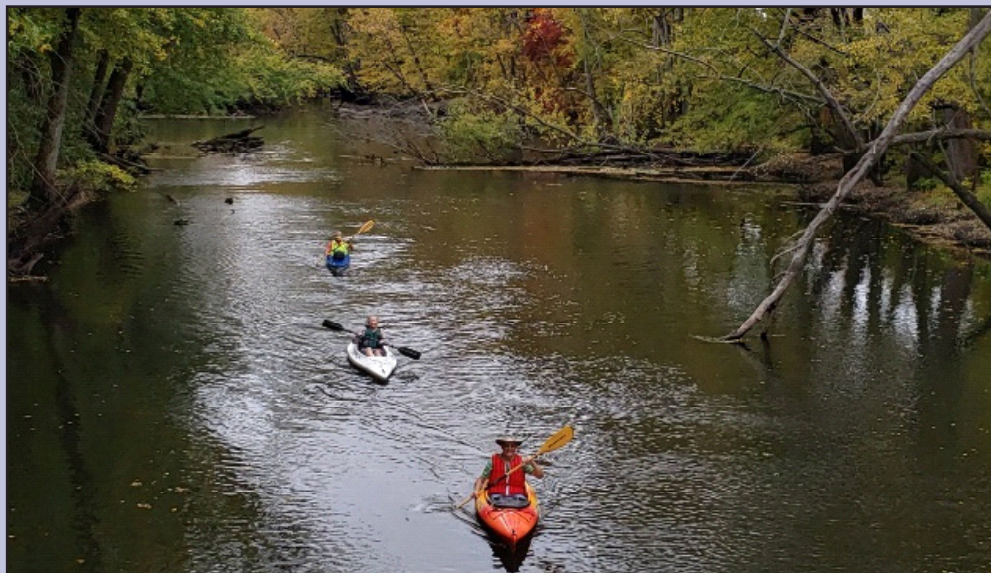
Stonegate Farms Subdivision, by 14 canoes and their 27 paddlers. The 6 cubic yards of trash collected from the Grand River included bottles, buckets, cans, clothes, furniture, glass, highway cones, lumber, plastic, pipes and 3 tires.

Snacks and drinks were provided to the volunteers after a successful cleanup. Thanks to our Grand River Clean Up volunteers, and the efforts of the Grand River Environmental Action Team, we are making an impact in the quality of the headwaters of the Grand River in Jackson County.

GREAT October 2020 Paddle Recap

By Deb Snell

GREAT's last paddle event of the season was held on Saturday, October 10. Twenty-three paddlers met on a fine fall day and headed upstream on the Grand River from the Trestle Park boat Launch on Dixon Road, near Rives Junction. Vibrant fall colors and mild temperatures made for a very pretty paddle. Paddlers made it almost to Youth Haven Ranch (east/downstream of Churchill Road) before heading back to the put-in location. We're looking forward to (hopefully!) resuming our normal paddle event schedule in the spring of 2021!



Keeping it Watershed Friendly in the Winter

5 tips for winter weather and clean water!

Here is some great advice from our friends at the Clinton River Watershed Council:

When snow and ice melts, the salt on roads, driveways and sidewalks get dissolved with it, washing into adjacent storm sewers and making its way to our local rivers, lakes and streams. Once in the water there is no way to remove the chloride, and at high concentrations chloride can harm fish and plant life.

Below are a few tips for keeping salt use down & waterways clean.

- Shovel first. The more snow and ice you remove manually, the less salt you will have to use. Break up ice with an ice scraper or shovel snow off walkways, then decide if application of de-icer or salt is necessary to maintain traction.

- Slow down. Drive for winter conditions and be courteous to slow-moving plows. The slower they drive, the more salt will stay on the road where it's needed.

- Use sparingly. More salt does not mean less ice. Use less than four pounds of salt per 1,000 square feet (an average parking space is about 150 square feet). One pound of salt is approxi-

mately a heaping 12-ounce coffee mug. Also be patient; salt takes time to work. Applying more salt before allowing time for it to take affect will lead to unnecessary contamination.

- Sweep it up. If extra salt or sand is visible on dry pavement, it is no longer doing any work and will be washed away. The excess can be swept up and reused for the next snow or disposed of in the trash.

- Wait for warm weather. Most salts stop working efficiently when the temperature is below 15 degrees. You can use sand instead for traction in these frigid conditions.



Adventures in Kayaking

Paddling the Rouge (part1)

By John Minar

While I enjoy the Grand River and appreciate its beauty, it is interesting to explore other rivers. Recently I paddled the Rouge River. Never before did I realize how unique it is from any other river in Michigan. It's scenic upstream contrasts with very heavy industry downstream. I'll address the pleasant, upstream portion in this issue. The dirty downstream Rouge River which caught fire on October 9, 1969 will follow in the 2021

spring GREAT newsletter.

Note to paddlers: Put in at the Melvindale Community Center. Ample parking, no charge. Head upstream about 5 miles to the Henry & Clara Ford Estate. An odd mixture of urban and natural river, a few miles of the Rouge is lined with concrete from I-94 to Michigan Avenue where it returns to a natural setting. Unlike the Grand River in downtown Jackson, the concrete portion has no walls and is gently inclined as if a beach.



A view of Ford's Fairlane mansion

Ford Motor Company World Headquarters can be seen in this section. Upstream, the Henry & Clara Ford Estate is as elegant from the river as it is inside. Henry Ford, a former employee of Thomas Edison, was equally enthusiastic in his quest for electrification and built the first Ford Motor electric car in 1913. (Not the first electric car ever made).

In 1915, Fairlane, the 31,000 sq. ft. mansion and adjoining powerhouse, were built on the Rouge River in Dearborn Michigan - far from their previous residence in the famous Boston-Edison District in Detroit.

Ford built a dam (disguised as rapids) to supply water to the powerplant turbines which provided electricity and heat for the estate. This dam made the entire upper Rouge River ecosystem a closed environment until 2021 when a 'bypass' is scheduled to open.

In an ironic twist of fate; Mr. Ford, born under oil lamps & candles July 30, 1863 died the same way. Without electricity, during the night of April 7, 1947 Mr. Ford died from an intracerebral hemorrhage at 83. The day before his death the Rouge River flooded knocking out electricity from his powerhouse.

Haehnle Sanctuary Wayward Crane of 2019

By Gary Siegrist

This last fall Haehnle Sanctuary was host to an immature Greater Sandhill Crane. It seems it was dropped off without permission around the Harold Wing Observation Hill in hopes that it would recognize other cranes as they flew in and join them for their migration south.

The year before the sanctuary had a similar case of dropping off an immature crane with the one exception that it was authorized. This meant that Ron Hoffman, resident crane expert, oversaw the release in a suitable area of sanctuary and it was successfully reunited with other cranes and eventually left with them to migrate.

When I found the crane on that fall Monday as the work crew was gathering, it was apparent this crane had been just dropped off without authorization in the preceding days and was roosting at the kiosk. By releasing this young crane not only did it endanger the crane but also visitors and pets. I am still surprised that harm did not come to this crane as it walked the trails and parking lot sometimes with individuals and sometime with groups.

Having done a visual of the young crane, I felt it was in good shape and was not hurt in anyway. I called Ron Hoffman and he immediately came over to sanctuary to observe this bird and the unusual behavior it was exhibiting. It would follow you around like a puppy, peck at your clothing or boots and beg for food. We concluded that it was highly imprinted on humans, possibly by being raised by one from a colt (that's what a young crane is called). The problem with this behavior is it will never seek its own kind and not



Haehnle's wayward crane of 2019

learn the migration routes so important to its survival.

So, for the "rest of the story", our young crane was taken over to a wildlife rehabilitator in Eaton Rapids via car ride (that's a whole other story) with hopes it could be released this spring. Thus, ends the saga of the wayward crane.

Moral of the story – Please do not try to care for injured or orphaned animals unless you have the proper training! Do what is best for the animal, place it in the care of an experienced wildlife rehabilitator. Check out www.friendsofwildlife.net for more info.

Wondering what to do with that pile of leaves in your yard? Try composting!

Raking up fallen leaves can be a fun fall activity or a challenging chore. While many homeowners rake leaves for curbside disposal, some are turning to composting, a simple and effective way to deal with organic waste. "Composting is nature's way of turning your leaves and grass into a valuable soil conditioner," said Aaron Hiday, Compost Program coordinator at the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE). Compost has several benefits. It: • Saves money by reducing the need for expensive bags and commercial soil additives. • Helps gardens and lawns by improving the fertility and health of the soil. • Saves water by helping the soil hold moisture and reducing water runoff. Improves the environment by recycling valuable organic resources and extending the lives of landfills. Getting started is easy. All you need is a pitchfork, rake and shovel, a compost bin and some soil. Compost bins can be purchased at a hardware store or made of inexpensive blocks, wire, wood or snow fencing. There are a few do's and don'ts for proper composting. • Do compost grass clippings, leaves, weeds, garden debris, small brush, twigs, clean wood ash, sawdust, wood chips, eggshells, coffee grounds and food waste. • Don't compost whole branches or logs, pet or human waste, charcoal briquette ash, sawdust from treated wood, meat or dairy food items. EGLE's handy Home Composting: Reap a



Heap of Benefits info sheet provides more valuable tips, as does this short video. If composting at home is not an option, check with your local municipality or recycler for yard waste drop-off locations. Composting is an easy way to dispose of organic waste with a ton of benefits. Get started today! Article courtesy of Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy



*Peace and joy to you
and yours this
Christmas season!*

Board Meetings

The GREAT board meets on the second Wednesday of each month, with the exception of December, at 7:00 p.m. alternating between the Summit Township Hall and Blackman Township Hall.

March's meeting will be held at Blackman Township. April's meeting at Summit Township Hall etc.

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

GREAT's Mission

The mission of Grand River Environmental Action Team is to promote the protection and preservation of the Grand River Watershed through activities and educational programs

Visit www.cafepress.com/greatmi to order a GREAT t-shirt and coffee mug

GREAT Newsletter

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



We accept these major credit cards at all of our functions.

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