

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

Volume 31 Number 1

February 2020



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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

Join us for GREAT's Annual Dinner and Meeting!

GREAT's Annual Dinner and Meeting will be held at Gene Davis and Sons Banquet and Convention Center, 3575 Francis Street in Jackson on Wednesday, March 11th. Dinner is \$15 per person (pay at the door) and starts at 6:30PM, meeting begins at 7:00PM.

Our guest speaker this year will be Michigan Conservation Officer Chris Reynolds, who will be teaching us a few "Rules of the River". We're sure he'll have a few interesting CO stories to share as well!

Current board members Kurt LaFrance, Deb Snell, Kay Brown, Benji Ward, Dan Kaser and Kenny Price will be running for re-election this year. In addition, the 2020 "Make It Happen" award will be named at the dinner.

Please join us for a fun and informative evening!

**Wednesday,
March 11th**

**Dinner at 6:30PM,
meeting begins at
7:00PM**

**Please RSVP
for dinner:
517-416-4234 or
grand@great-mi.org
no later than Friday,
March 6th at noon**



Come See Us!

February 29, 2020

9am - 5:30pm

Michigan State University Pavilion

www.QASadventures.org



QUIET ADVENTURES SYMPOSIUM

The 25th Annual Quiet Adventures Symposium will be this year on Saturday, February 29, 2020. It will be held again at the Michigan State University Pavilion located at 4301 Farm Lane in East Lansing from 9:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. There will be over 150 exhibits, speakers and demonstrations geared towards outdoor adventures. The entry fee is \$15.00 for adults, \$5.00 for students with identification and children under 12 are free. This day

has become the official start of spring for the outdoor people of the Great Lakes. Campers, hikers, cyclists, sailors, anglers, and of course paddle sport enthusiasts will find the symposium to be the nexus for beginning their 2020 outdoor adventures.

Be sure to stop by and see us at the GREAT booth!

For more information on the event visit QASadventures.com. We hope to see you there!

GREAT Website - New and Improved!

The Grand River Environmental Action Team launched a new website in January. The web address remains the same at www.great-mi.org. This new website is sponsored by Wild Apricot and was developed for nonprofit organizations. You

can easily search for upcoming events, renew your membership, learn some GREAT history, and more! Please give our new website a try! Below you will find a snapshot of the cover page of the new website.

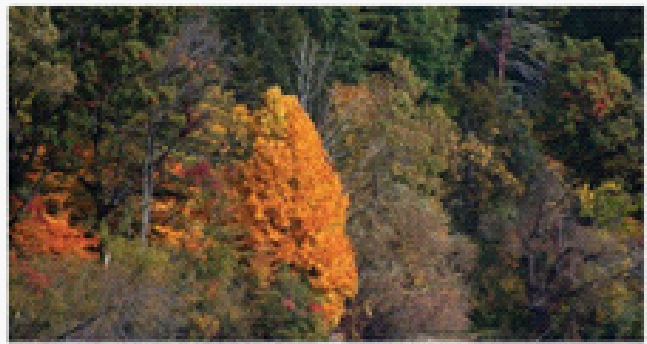


Grand River Environmental Action Team

G.R.E.A.T. Grand River Environmental Action Team

Founded in 1990, the Grand River Environmental Action Team is a Local 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the protection of and restoration of the Upper River Watershed in the Jackson County of south central Michigan.

GREAT organizes clean-up activities & monthly public paddling outings to create environmental awareness



For more information on the 2020 Grand River Expedition

Click on the Following Link Below

<http://mgrow.org/grand-river-expedition/>



UPCOMING EVENTS

No upcoming events

CURRENT NEWSLETTER

[FALL 2019 PDF.pdf](#)

MEETING AGENDA

[JANUARY 2020A.pdf](#)

JOIN US OR RENEW MEMBERSHIP

Jackson Earth Day Celebration

Saturday, April 25th



Earth Day 2019 - Kenny Price and his new friend



Earth Day 2019 - Spending some quality time on the water.



Earth Day 2019 - Ducklings make the day even more memorable!



Earth Day 2019 - One of our first time paddlers.



Earth Day 2019 - A family enjoys paddling around the Cascades lagoons

By Kenny Price

For the thirteenth (13th) year in a row, the Jackson County Conservation District is sponsoring the “Celebrate Earth Day” Festival in Jackson County. This FREE festival for the public is designed to increase awareness of the outdoors, provide environmental education opportunities, and will include interactive displays and hands-on activities, classroom critters, live music, and lots of family-friendly activities! The event will take place on Saturday, April 25th at Cascades (Sparks) County Park from 1-4pm. Area environmental and outdoor groups such as Jackson Masters Garden-

**Celebrating
The
50th
Anniversary
of Earth Day
1970-2020**

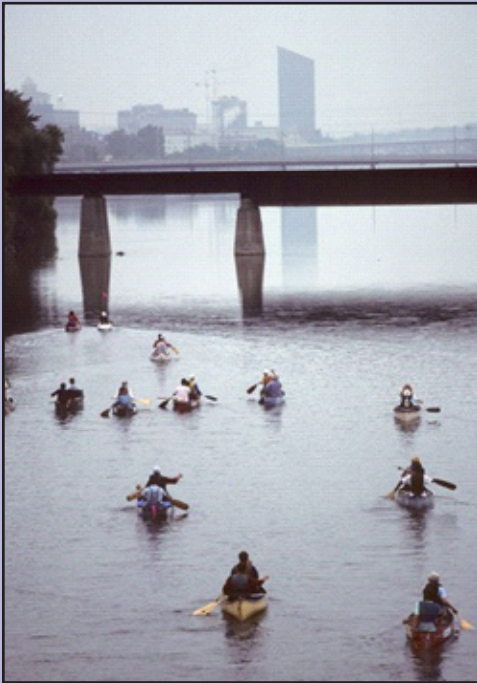
ers, Recycle Jackson, Jackson County Parks, Sierra Club, as well as many others will all have booths at the event.

G.R.E.A.T. will of course be there, so the public can experience canoeing and kayaking. For many people this will be the first time they’ve ever been in or paddled a canoe or kayak. Looking back over the past 13 years that G.R.E.A.T. has participated in this event, we’ve had over 1000 people experience the pleasure of paddling!

Please note: The location of the event has changed slightly this year – you will find us near the Urban Fishery pond on the north side of the Cascades falls (rather than across the street from the Cascade Manor House near the large pavilion as in past years).

Some Grand River Expedition History...

Verlen Kruger and Expedition 1990



Expedition 1990 at Grand Rapids

By Bryon Ennis

This July will mark thirty years since river enthusiasts first embarked on an expedition to paddle the Grand River's entire length. The start, in 1990, took place at Michigan Center Lake on the north branch of the Grand in Jackson County. The termination point would be 250 miles away in South Haven on Lake Michigan.

Paddling most stretches of the Grand was common and necessary while Michigan was inhabited by only Native Americans and later by French fur trappers and traders. It was their highway, where canoes capable of transporting a ton of freight were a common sight. As Michigan became settled by immigrants, the Grand served a different purpose, that of floating logs from inland operations to lumber mills downstream. Then, as the logging era evolved into agriculture, more dams were built to mill grain, and then to generate electricity for the growing cities.

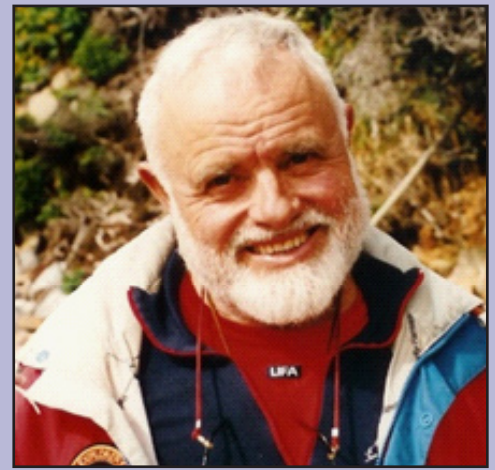
From approximately the 1850s until the late 1950s, cities began to become industrialized quickly. For the next 100

years it was generally accepted that the price of prosperity was a degraded environment, especially along rivers whose primary function became waste disposal. During this 100-year period, those living in cities were forced to move their recreational activities away from these industrialized waterways to those in more remote undeveloped locations.

Verlen Kruger's family did just that. Though Verlen lived along Michigan's Grand River in Lansing, he did not begin to experience paddling there. It was instead on a family vacation to a remote location in Canada that Verlen, in a rented canoe, first came to experience the joy of canoeing. Perhaps his experience as a fighter pilot in WWII enabled Verlen to recognize the physical similarities between sleek maneuverable fighter planes in the air and his canoe in water. Though the early trips to Canada were weekend affairs with the whole family, it was not long before Verlen said, "I would look down some of those serpentine coastlines and I could see myself just continuing on to wherever I chose to go. What a dream that was."

The next stage of canoe adventures for Verlen became canoe racing, once again on fairly remote and nearly pristine rivers such as the AuSable in northern Michigan. Similar to the manner in which he learned to become a pilot, Verlen attacked the subject of canoeing with nearly total commitment.

One of Verlen's first paddling partners, other than his wife Jenny, was a friend named Clint Waddell. Verlen and Clint paddled many canoe races together, and often won or finished among the top participants. The first multi-day race Clint and Verlen entered was across the Canadian-Minnesota Boundary Waters from Atikoken, Canada to Ely, Minnesota and back to Atikoken. The first year they had to drop out because of a terrible miscalculation in nutrition, but a year later they won, beating some of the best long-



Verlen Kruger

distance canoeists in North America.

During the next twenty years Verlen and several different partners undertook increasingly difficult canoe expeditions. The 1971 Cross Continent Canoe Safari from Montreal, Canada, to the Bering Sea following the old Fur Trade Route. Nearly ten years after this northerly expedition, Verlen embarked on the 1980-1983 Ultimate Canoe Challenge along both the Atlantic and Pacific coastlines of United States and Canada, traveling over 28,000 miles.

Between 1986 and 1989, Verlen (now in his mid-sixties) and his partner at the time, Valerie Fons, embarked on the Two Continent Canoe Expedition which would take them from the Bering Sea in Canada to Cape Horn at the southern tip of South America. When Verlen and Valerie returned to Michigan, they were lauded as heroic adventurers, exciting a long dormant paddling enthusiasm across Michigan.

By this time Verlen had logged over 100,000 miles on his various expeditions. The effects of the Clean Water Act of 1972 had begun to show promising results improving the quality of America's industrial rivers. Michigan's Grand River had improved significantly by the late 80's, and there was already serious talk of an expedition down its entire length. Verlen and Valerie, now married, were approached to help plan and guide this expedition. After all, if they had found their way from Canada

See EXPEDITION HISTORY on page 5



Grand River Expedition for 2020

July 5-18, 2020!

SAVE the DATE

The Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds (MGROW), in partnership with the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance (of which GREAT is a participating member) and the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds, will present the Grand River Expedition 2020 on July 5-18, 2020! Go to <https://mgrow.org/grand-river-expedition/> and fill out the **GRE2020 contact form to start receiving updates.**

The daily schedule for the 2020 Grand River Expedition has been finalized! The itinerary will feature some new campsites, along with some you might remember from 2010 and earlier. Here are some highlights:

- Sunday, July 5 – afternoon headwaters tour (optional), with pre-launch camping at Vandercook Lake Park near Jackson
- Monday, July 6 – launch from Vandercook Lake
- Friday, July 17 – camping and closing ceremonies at Connor Bayou near Grand Haven
- Saturday morning, July 18 – short paddle to Grand Haven, quick load-and-go at Harbor Island Park

In addition to the daily itinerary, MGROW will soon be announcing:

- Fee schedule for day paddlers, section paddlers, and the full Expedition
- Registration process
- Shuttle planning if you want to spot a car in Grand Haven
- What to bring
- Activities for paddlers and non-paddlers
- Volunteer opportunities



Grand River Expedition 2010 – And they're off!

2020 will be the fourth Expedition since the legendary paddler Verlen Kruger first launched the event in 1990. Verlen was the Rivermaster for the second Expedition in 2000. The 2010 event carried on his legacy, and once again we'll honor his memory in 2020 as we paddle the 250-mile length of the Grand River from Jackson to Grand Haven over 14 days in July.

2020 will offer:

- day trip opportunities to paddle with the Expedition
- a focus on the communities along with river, with activities for paddlers and non-paddlers alike
- a celebration of Michigan DNR's designation of the Upper and Middle sections of the Grand as Michigan Water Trails
- adventure, learning, and camaraderie for anyone who is passionate about our rivers and their role in our changing landscape.

Past expeditions have included educational presentations and water quality monitoring. Traditionally, some participants make the entire trip, camping along the way, while others paddle shorter stretches. Participants have included scientists, historians, educators, students, environmental professionals, civic and business leaders, government representatives, writers, and paddlers ranging in age from 12 to 85.

Make plans to join us for all or part of the Grand River Expedition 2020!

EXPEDITION HISTORY continued from page 4

to South America and survived, who better to lead Michigan river enthusiasts than this couple?

They agreed partly because they were both strong advocates of positive action to improve the condition of our rivers. Both were uninterested in complaints about what was. They were more interested in what could be. Verlen and Valerie became the "Rivermasters" for Grand River Expedition 1990. Whatever reservations participants might have had about pad-

dling the length of the Grand, they were diffused by Verlen's and Valerie's presence. Fifty-five boats began that trip to South Haven and Lake Michigan. Among them were John and Jodi Riggs, the only participants from Jackson to make the entire float, who went on to be among the founders of GREAT.

The author wishes to acknowledge excerpts for this article were taken from All Things are Possible, by Phil Petersen.

G.R.E.A.T.'s Grand Beginnings

By Kenny Price

One of the many issues of Life is that we do not keep an eye on our history, we always look to the future. There is nothing wrong with eyeing the future, but if we don't remember our history, we never know where we came from and are apt to repeat some of the errors of our past. So, this and future articles will take a look back at our G.R.E.A.T. history.

In the 1990's everyone knew why and when G.R.E.A.T. started, but now 29 years later, the memories are dim. The sad thing is that the brave men and women who started G.R.E.A.T are gone and are only a dim memory. Hopefully this article will bring them back to our mind.

The Grand Expedition in August of 1990 brought a yearning to people to get on the Grand River and to try and make it live again. By January 1991, three public meetings had been held and a G.R.E.A.T. Board of Directors was appointed. Marge Hanselman became President. Marge and Dave Hanselman of Clark Lake, John and Jodi Riggs of Jackson, Nancy Lapinski of Jackson, John and Joan Bunkers of Somerset, George Hunt of Jackson, Barry Elder of Jackson and Jeff Jones of Jackson became the first Board of Directors of G.R.E.A.T. They met at several different locations in the beginning.

Their short-term goals were: 1. Clean up and identify river access points from Liberty to northern Jackson County Line. 2. Organize a county wide Grand River Cleanup. 3. Develop public awareness and consciousness about our Grand. 4. Create a recreational map system, identifying access points, wildlife areas, and canoeing potential.

Their long-term goals were: 1. Act as "watch dog" environmentalists to protect the Jackson County watershed, the river and its wetlands. 2. Develop funding sources from grants and community involvement. 3. Create a public information program for area groups. 4. Seek means and funding to remove the cap off the Grand River and implement the 1976 City of Jackson Grand River Park Plan.

They came up with "What you can do for the Grand River": 1. Landscape your property to temporarily hold rainwater. 2. Plant and protect vegetation on the slopes of the stream/riverbank to prevent erosion. 3. Install a water saver in the shower and toilet tank; don't run water unnecessarily. 4. Keep watch for littering on our rivers and roads; rivers are not dumps! and 5. Join G.R.E.A.T.

The original G.R.E.A.T board came with the slogan "Be GREAT". A slogan that we 29 years later ought to renew. With this article is a copy of the first G.R.E.A.T. logo. I think the Great Blue Heron taking off, is a scene many of us have seen on the Grand River. Perhaps we

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

Jackson's Grand Beginnings



G.R.E.A.T.

should consider using it again, 29 years later.

So here is a toast to the G.R.E.A.T. "PAST", "PRESENT" and "FUTURE"! ...

Grand River Clearing Project

By Jack Ripstra

Geoffrey W. Snyder, the Jackson County Drain Commissioner, contracted with GEI Consultants of Michigan to clear 19 log jams on the Grand River (which is designated an Inter-county Drain through a significant portion of Jackson County) in the Fall of 2019. The crew, working out of a flat bottom boat

with chain saws and hand winches, spent 15 days clearing 5.2 miles of the river from I-94 North to Maple Grove Road. Many thanks to Geoffrey W. Snyder for making this section of the Grand River Water Trail now passable by canoes and kayaks!

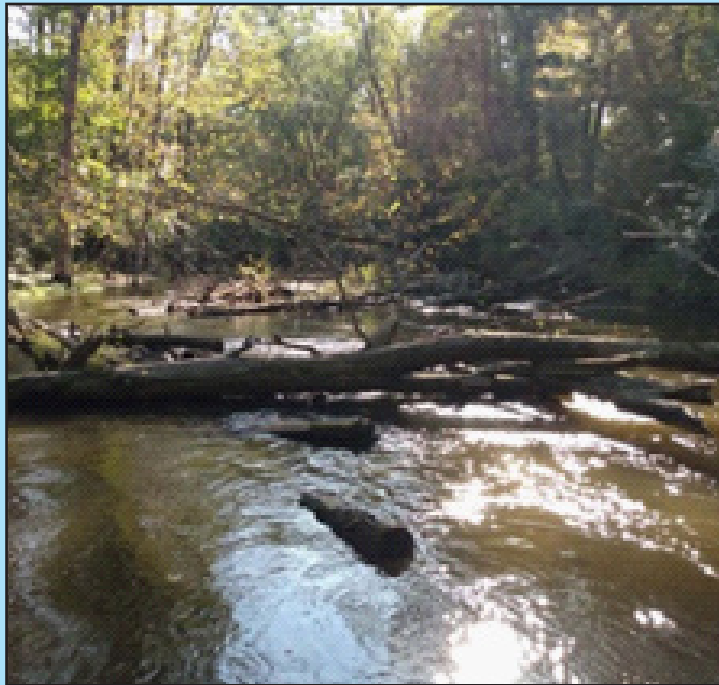
Here are a couple before and after pictures. What a transformation!



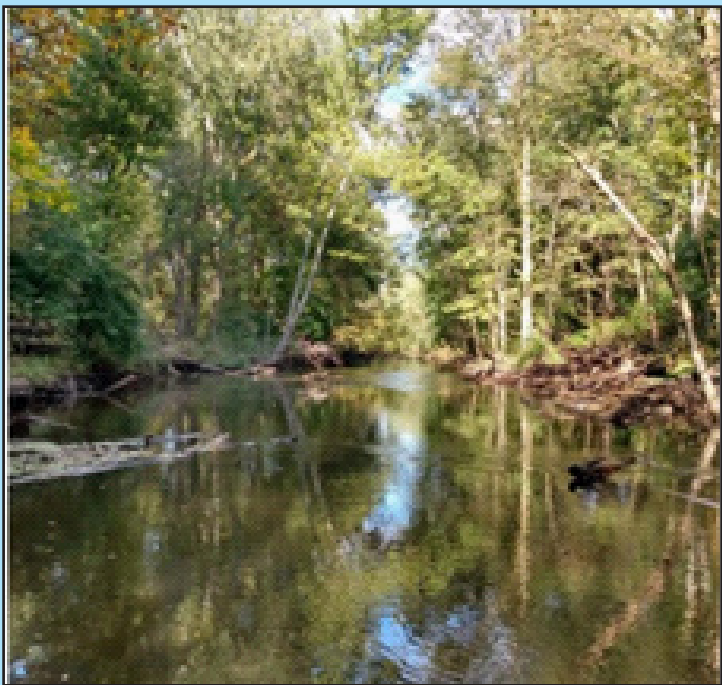
Obstruction Point #16
Before clearing activities



Obstruction Point #16
After clearing activities



Obstruction Point #16
Before clearing activities



Obstruction Point #16
After clearing activities



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you have a chainsaw, or can use 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. 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

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

GREAT
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Phone: 517-416-4234

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.

GREAT Board

Kenny Price, President
Kurt LaFrance, Vice-President
Deb Snell, Secretary
Jack L. Ripstra, Treasurer
Kay Brown, Director
Jon Hoyle, Director
Cathy Jehnzen, Director
Jeff Lolkus, Director
Dan Kaser, Director
John Minar, Director
Kurt Rudolph, Director
Benji Ward, Director

Special Assignments

Kurt Rudolph, Publicity
Jeff Grund, Tax Statements
Pam Brown, Historian