



Huron Pines



Conserving the Forests, Lakes and Streams of Northeast Michigan

Annual Report 2006



Katy Ramsdell

Serving Northeast Michigan

Huron Pines is focused on conserving the forests, lakes and streams of Northeast Michigan through our primary program areas of Land Stewardship, Aquatic Restoration and Conservation Leadership. Our results-oriented organization is a leader in the coordination of hands-on, practical conservation projects. By bringing together partners and funding, identifying resource needs, and developing long-term solutions, Huron Pines is working to make our unique part of Michigan a better place to live, work and recreate.

This past year, to better meet the needs in our service area, we added staff and expanded our Board of Directors. We placed more emphasis on our key conservation programs and began developing projects that could provide more help to our grassroots partners. 2006 was a tremendous year for getting things done and we're grateful to our partners and supporters for making it all possible. We were able to complete many more projects than we could even include in this report and utilized 1.2 million dollars in funding from all types of sources in order to accomplish our work.

There is a lot to be positive about, but yet there remain many conservation challenges facing the region. The work coordinated through Huron Pines, such as implementing large-scale restoration projects or developing pro-active conservation plans, is essential for maintaining the high quality natural resources in our region. These are resources which are more intensively used and developed each year and thus we ask for your continued support as we move ahead with the conservation agenda.

Huron Pines Service Area:

6,700
Square Miles

4,288,154
Acres

5,005
River Miles

172,800
Lake Acres

285
Miles of Lake Huron Shoreline

9
Major Watersheds

1.6
Million acres of Public Land

11
Counties



The Pigeon River Habitat Initiative (PRHI) partnership was formed in 2001 by private citizens, state and federal agencies, and nonprofit organizations all with an interest in preserving the wild character of the Pigeon River Country (PRC). To help implement the goals of the partnership, a Habitat Specialist meets with private property owners in the buffer zone lands surrounding the PRC to explore land conservation options, develop forestry management plans, and implement techniques that will attract wildlife to their property.

The 2006 season brought new changes to the PRHI with the hiring of Eric Nelson to serve as the Pigeon River Habitat Specialist. Nelson is working with Dan Sikarskie, Huron Pines Forester, and is meeting with interested landowners, making recommendations, and coordinating with PRHI partners to assist landowners in deciding on the most appropriate land management options, based on the desired goals of the landowner.

The PRHI partnership is committed to further expansion of this program. Priorities include habitat enhancement at oil and gas drill pad sites in and around the Pigeon area, outreach to local units of government, parcel mapping within the buffer zone, invasive species control, and development of more projects for the area.

A long-term goal of Huron Pines is to take this targeted approach to other parts of our service area, helping our conservation partners such as the Conservation Districts, MDNR, NRCS and Conservancies to implement more programs with landowners of key ecological properties.

2006 Funding Sources

**Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Merit Energy
Otsego Wildlife Legacy Society
Charlevoix County Community Foundation
Ruffed Grouse Society**

The Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) is a voluntary program offering landowners the opportunity to protect, restore and enhance wetlands on their property. The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) administers the program and has contracted Huron Pines to mark the wetlands that have been enrolled in the program. The WRP encourages private land owners to remove those historic wetland areas and areas prone to frequent flooding from active agriculture production and restore them to a more natural state. Restoring wetlands protects water quality by reducing runoff and enhances wildlife habitat dependent upon wetlands for survival. The Wetland Reserve Program offers cost-share opportunities and requires either a 10-year, 30-year or permanent commitment from the landowner.

Huron Pines has been involved with the program for several years and has traveled the state meeting with landowners and posting signs to identify wetland boundaries.

In 2006, nearly 800 signs were posted marking 2,974 acres of wetlands throughout the state. Landowners interested in this program should contact their local Conservation District office.



Pigeon River Habitat Initiative 2006 Accomplishments:

23

Individual site visits with private landowners

1,396

Acres placed under forest stewardship plans

58

Acres of wildlife food plots planted

23

Permanent land protection referrals sent to Conservancies

Watershed Management

What is Watershed Management?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point. Watershed Management is the process of identifying resource needs and concerns in a particular watershed and developing solutions to meet those needs. This is accomplished by bringing together various partners including resource professionals, local officials, conservation groups, riparian landowners and concerned citizens. Their work begins with conducting resource inventories and reviewing past studies to identify sources of pollution. Sources of pollution typically include eroding streambanks, road/stream crossing sites, faulty septic systems, polluted runoff from city storm drains and agriculture fields, and improper development practices along lakes or rivers.

Once the problems are identified, the partners develop recommendations to improve and protect their watershed. These recommendations include implementation of on-the-ground restoration practices, changes to land use decisions and managerial practices, and development of an education outreach program. However, developing the management plan is only the first step. It is vital that the partners implement the strategies outlined in the plan in order to improve water quality, wildlife habitat and ensure future generations have the opportunity to enjoy the natural resources of the watershed as much as we do.

Northern Michigan is blessed with many high quality lakes and rivers. The quality of the natural resources is one of the reasons many of us choose to live and work in the area or visit on a regular basis. Ongoing restoration projects are one way to improve these resources. In addition, pro-active, preventative projects must also occur. Working with local officials to update their zoning, permanent land stewardship options and an outreach and education campaign are all ways to prevent problems from occurring.

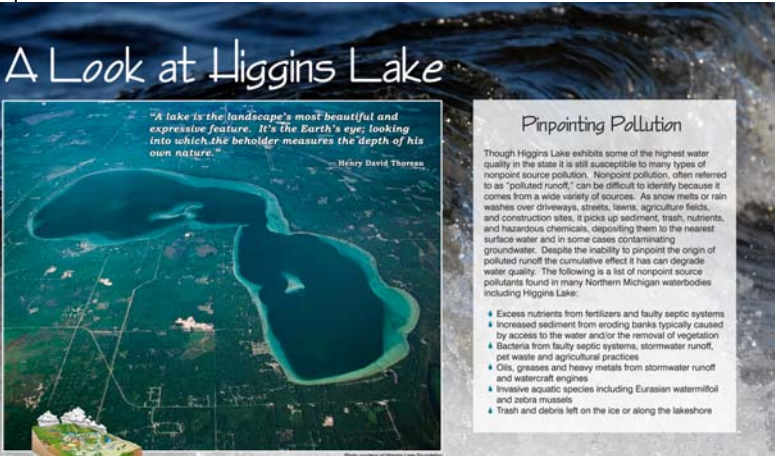
Typical Recommendations for Watershed Improvement in Northern Michigan

- ◆ Reduce sedimentation by improving eroding streambanks and poor road/stream crossings.
- ◆ Decrease nutrient input by improving septic systems, controlling agriculture runoff and encouraging good lawn care practices.
- ◆ Protect sensitive parcels by promoting permanent land stewardship options.
- ◆ Increase watershed awareness by local officials, landowners, agriculture producers, foresters, road commissions, school groups and other stakeholders and provide tools for implementing good water quality practices.

Outreach and Education Programs can create an awareness of the value of our water resources, educate people on what's threatening our resources, establish the connection between land and water, and motivate citizens to take protective action.

Higgins Lake Outreach

A large component of the Higgins Lake Watershed project was to conduct an intensive outreach program. Huron Pines sent over 1,200 packets full of land stewardship tips to riparian landowners, hosted a land use planning workshop for local officials and a naturalization workshop promoting the reestablishment of native greenbelts, produced two 30-second public service announcements and created a permanent educational kiosk for the South State Park. This was in addition to the update of the Watershed Management Plan and the installation of five waterfront greenbelts.



A Look at Higgins Lake

"A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It's the Earth's eye; looking into which, the beholder measures the depth of his own nature."
Henry David Thoreau

Pinpointing Pollution

Though Higgins Lake exhibits some of the highest water quality in the state it is still susceptible to many types of nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint pollution, often referred to as "polluted runoff," can be difficult to identify because it comes from a wide variety of sources. As snow melts or rain washes over driveways, streets, lawns, agriculture fields, and construction sites, it picks up sediment, trash, nutrients, and hazardous chemicals, depositing them to the nearest surface water and in some cases contaminating groundwater. Despite the inability to pinpoint the origin of polluted runoff the cumulative effect it has can degrade water quality. The following is a list of nonpoint source pollutants found in many Northern Michigan waterbodies including Higgins Lake.

- ◆ Excess nutrients from fertilizers and faulty septic systems
- ◆ Increased sediment from eroding banks typically caused by access to the water and/or the removal of vegetation
- ◆ Bacteria from faulty septic systems, stormwater runoff, pet waste and agricultural practices
- ◆ Oils, greases and heavy metals from stormwater runoff and watercraft engines
- ◆ Invasive aquatic species including Eurasian watermilfoil and zebra mussels
- ◆ Trash and debris left on the ice or along the lakeshore

Watershed Wise

A watershed is an area of land where water drains to a common point. No matter where you are, you're in a watershed. The Higgins Lake Watershed forms the headwaters, or the beginning, of the Muskegon River Watershed, which eventually empties into Lake Michigan.

Watershed size	Higgins Lake surface area
28,731 acres	10,198 acres
Miles of shoreline	Deepest point in the lake
21.8 miles	135 feet in the north basin



Yours to Protect

Examining the Effects of Nonpoint Pollution

Clean water is essential to all life, yet everyday activities can impair water quality thus reducing recreational opportunities and harming the ecosystem of the lake. The following is a list of pollutants and the detrimental effects they have on water quality.

- ◆ Excess nutrients lead to increased weed and algae growth
- ◆ Shoreline erosion clouds water, obstructs waterways, impacts wildlife habitat and can smother fish spawning areas
- ◆ Bacteria can cause stress in humans and wildlife. Too much bacteria in a waterbody can lead to beach closings
- ◆ Oils and heavy metals can increase health risk factors in humans and wildlife
- ◆ Invasive species interfere with the natural ecosystem by destroying native habitats; they also interfere with recreation activities including swimming, fishing and boating
- ◆ Trash disrupts wildlife, interferes with recreation activities and spoils the natural beauty of the lake.

Taking the First Steps Toward Responsible Stewardship

Higgins Lake is known for its crystal clear waters, abundant wildlife, and boundless recreational opportunities making it very important for those living around or using the lake to be aware of their impact on water quality. Because the majority of polluted runoff is directly linked to human activities you have the power to make changes to protect your waters. Whether you're a visitor to Higgins Lake or a permanent resident you have the opportunity to positively influence this valuable resource.

Leisure on Higgins Lake

Though you may only visit Higgins Lake for a few hours your help is needed to prevent pollutants from entering the lake. Consider following these few steps:

- ◆ Stop the spread of invasive species by cleaning your boat, trailer, and other equipment before entering Higgins Lake
- ◆ Remove trash and debris when leaving the lake, especially when ice fishing
- ◆ Be careful to avoid spills when fueling your boat
- ◆ Use designated boat launches to reduce erosion at boat ends
- ◆ Dispose of pet waste appropriately before it can be washed into the lake
- ◆ Always respect other users and private property

Live on Higgins Lake

Maintaining a healthy yard can provide years of recreation enjoyment, be aesthetically pleasing, provide wildlife habitat, and protect one of your most valuable resources—Higgins Lake. Listed below are numerous stewardship practices to help homeowners protect water quality.

- ◆ Maintain native vegetation along the lakeshore; it helps control erosion, capture pollutants and provide vital wildlife habitat
- ◆ Reduce the amount of fertilizer used and, when applying fertilizer, use a "no-phosphorus" product
- ◆ Have your septic tank inspected every 3-5 years; pump as needed
- ◆ Reduce shoreline erosion by planting native vegetation, creating mulched walkways or installing stairs if necessary

This information was provided by Huron Pines, a nonprofit organization working to conserve the forests, lakes, and streams of Northern Michigan. If you would like to learn more about Higgins Lake visit our website www.huronpines.org or call (800) 344-0763.

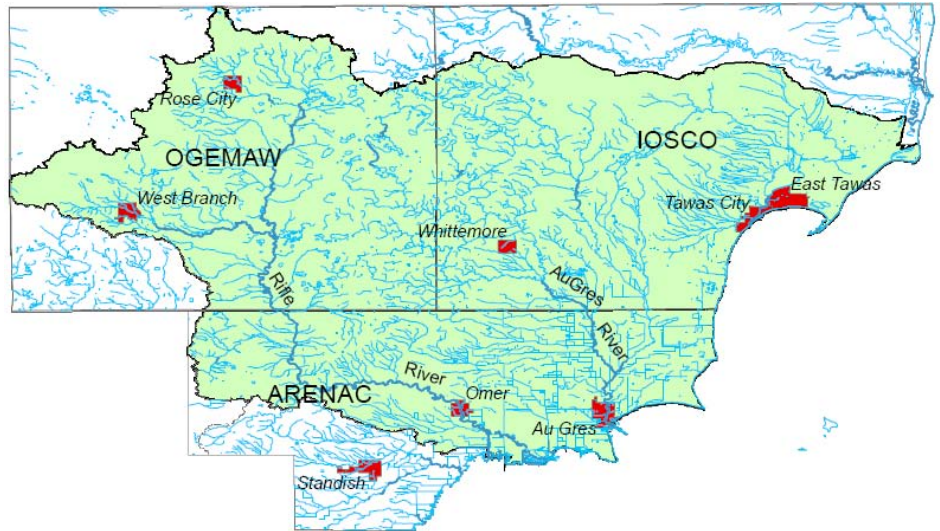
Protecting the Forests and Watersheds of Michigan Department of Community and Economic Development Michigan Department of Natural Resources Michigan Department of Environment and the Michigan Department of Health Services

Huron Pines DEQ

Background photo courtesy of Tony Marston

Rifle-Au Gres Watershed Assessment

The Rifle-Au Gres Watershed drains approximately 1030 square miles of land directly to Lake Huron. Over 16% of the land is actively managed for agricultural purposes. Huron Pines received a grant from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to conduct a "Rapid Watershed Assessment." This process involves reviewing existing studies, developing a GIS database and gathering public input to identify resource needs of the area. The final product will include a Resource Profile showing existing conditions and a Needs Assessment identifying solutions to watershed concerns. In addition, Huron Pines is developing a Resource CD-ROM containing farmland assistance information and other programs to help residents protect their land. We are also hosting a series of Watershed Leadership Workshops. Completion of this project will help NRCS and partners to focus their programs in a concentrated area.



Upper Manistee Watershed Protection Project

Huron Pines is coordinating a watershed planning project funded through the MDEQ and the Clean Water Act-Section 319 Program. As part of the project we are working with Conservation Resource Alliance, MDEQ, MDNR, Upper Manistee River Association and landowners to develop a watershed management plan.

In addition to developing the management plan, Huron Pines has been conducting an outreach and education program. We have developed and disseminated landowner packets to those living along the Upper Manistee River. A technician has met individually with landowners to discuss riparian living and promote the development of native greenbelts along the shoreline. Also, staff have conducted presentations to local lake and river associations and we have hosted a watershed workshop.

Eighteen riparian landowners attended the Upper Manistee Workshop this fall. The morning session included presentations from CRA, MDNR and Huron Pines covering topics of stream ecology, Natural Rivers designation, waterfront stewardship practices and bio-erosion control techniques. After lunch the attendees and presenters participated in a 2-hour float on the Manistee River from M-72 to "Hole-in-the-Wall." Presenters guided the tour and pointed out examples of good and poor greenbelts, areas where the restoration committee had completed erosion control practices and different techniques riparian landowners can use to protect their shoreline while improving water quality and wildlife habitat.

We were very fortunate to have such beautiful weather and only one canoe tipped during the whole trip! Special thanks to Shel Haven Canoe Livery for providing canoes for the trip.



Conservation Leadership

Requests for assistance from conservation groups and other nonprofits has swelled in the past couple of years. We intend to meet these increasing needs in a variety of ways, including dedicating more staff time to provide assistance, hosting conservation leadership programs, preparing resource libraries so groups have easy access to materials, providing more educational information on our website and developing a conservation listserv so partners can communicate and share ideas.

The idea behind the Conservation Leadership Program is to more effectively help our partners achieve their resource goals. In addition to the many restoration projects and education programs we conduct yearly, Huron Pines will be focusing more effort on helping project partners accomplish their goals in the coming year. We are currently working with the AmeriCorps Program to provide technical help to groups throughout our region to assist with organizational and programmatic needs.

Services Provided to Partners

Completed paperwork for Alcona County Cedar Lake Association to successfully obtain their own 501(c)(3) nonprofit status.

Currently serving as a fiscal agent for 12 groups without their own nonprofit status.

Prepared grant applications on behalf of Gerrish Township, Sturgeon For Tomorrow, Pine River-Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition, City of Grayling and Otsego Lake Partnership.

Coordinated partnerships to address resource needs with groups including the Otsego Lake Association, Pine River-Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition, Ocqueoc River Commission, Higgins Lake Foundation and the Au Sable River Watershed Restoration Committee.

Provided web pages dedicated to partner accomplishments and promoted partner events online.

Prepared support documents for greenbelt zoning and setbacks for use by partners in the Ocqueoc River and Higgins Lake watersheds.

Conducted 34 presentations to conservation groups, reaching more than 600 people.

Provided administrative support for the Michigan Tree Farm Program, a statewide forestry certification program for private landowners.

Administered funding through the US Forest Service for community improvement projects in Crawford, Montmorency and Alcona counties.

As our conservation leadership program continues to develop, member organizations are encouraged to contact the Huron Pines office for help with the tasks below. We hope to expand our offerings in the coming months and help our grassroots partners develop and implement the conservation projects that are important in their respective areas.

- ◆ Development of project proposals
- ◆ Grant writing
- ◆ Educational presentations
- ◆ Organizational capacity building
- ◆ Providing a gateway to assistance from resource professionals, engineers, specialized contractors, and others who can often help to bring projects to fruition.

“We appreciate your organization’s work, especially habitat improvement and stormwater management.

Among several choices, yours stands out. The Challenge Chapter of Trout Unlimited is proud to make a membership donation to your organization.”

**Dave Parker
Challenge Chapter of Trout Unlimited**

2006 was a great year for both building awareness in local communities about the need for stormwater management and for continuing the implementation of Best Management Practices to reduce polluted stormwater runoff.

Through the past year, we were able to learn what sort of plants survive and function better than others in stormwater treatment areas from the 85 rain gardens that were planted in Grayling. Also, two underground units that separate oils and sediment from stormwater were installed in downtown Grayling. After two more of these units are installed in 2007, all of the major stormwater outfalls in the City of Grayling will be utilizing some method of treatment before the water makes its way into the Au Sable River. In addition to the more traditional conservation partners, the Michigan Department of Transportation became actively involved this year. Cooperation from their regional and Lansing staff was very good and MDOT contributed \$90,000 in funding toward stormwater management in the Au Sable River Watershed.

Building on the success of the work in Grayling, Huron Pines also worked with a private contractor and partners in the City of West Branch and completed an initial scoping study with recommendations that will hopefully be implemented in the next couple of years.

In Rogers City, Huron Pines completed a stormwater study and recommendations, which staff presented to the City Council this past spring. Additionally, HP staff received a request from community leaders in Oscoda to come in and discuss stormwater options for their area as well. Our staff also made presentations highlighting stormwater options at a Michigan Department of Environmental Quality training session in Bellaire and at the West Michigan Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building meeting in Grand Rapids.

Documented studies show the negative impact of polluted stormwater runoff and, in northern Michigan, there is a great opportunity to pro-actively attack the problem before it ruins our rivers. In 2007, HP is dedicating a full-time position to work with communities to address the issue.



November 2006 installation of a stormwater oil-grit separator in Grayling to reduce pollution that harms the Au Sable River.



Rogers City Stormwater Assessment

At the request of the Rogers City Mayor and City Manager, Huron Pines obtained funding from the Michigan Coastal Management Program to prepare a Stormwater Assessment for the City. We mapped existing storm drain systems, delineated the drainage zones, estimated the amount of flow through each zone and estimated the amount of polluted runoff reaching Lake Huron from city streets, parking lots, driveways and other impervious surfaces. Huron Pines then developed recommendations for improving stormwater runoff conditions in the City that included such things as strengthening ordinances to reduce future runoff, retrofitting existing drainage zones with both natural infiltration (rain gardens) and mechanical treatment units, and distributing educational packets to residents.

Huron Pines also conducted a hands-on, educational awareness project with the Presque Isle Academy to place decals stating "No Dumping, Drains to Lake" on over 300 catch basins in Rogers City.

River Restoration

Given time, river systems can adjust to stresses caused by changes in conditions. When these changes occur more quickly than the river can adjust, the system becomes unstable. The focus of the HP River Restoration Program is to prevent such changes from overwhelming the natural balance of our rivers. Waterfront development, removal of streambank vegetation, erosion, and stormwater runoff are all examples of changes in conditions which can negatively impact our northern Michigan rivers.

Focus areas of our River Restoration Program continue to be sediment reduction (through streambank stabilization and road crossing improvements) and instream habitat enhancement. Both areas lend successful examples from this past field season.

Stabilization projects included two sites on the Au Sable River (Wakeley Landing and Sunrise Club), one site on the North Branch Au Sable, and one site at the Warbler's Hideaway Association on Big Creek, also in the Au Sable system. Each of these sites threatened the river system by contributing large amounts of sediment to streams already stressed by a high sediment load.

The Huron Pines restoration crew was busy all summer working to replenish Large Woody Debris (LWD) in the river system. Historic human activity has left Northern Michigan streams all but devoid of LWD, which is an integral part of instream habitat in these systems. Projects this summer focused on the Au Sable River from Grayling to McMaster's Bridge, below the Mio and Alcona dams, and on the North Branch Au Sable in southern Otsego County. Nearly 900 trees were used to create over 200 instream habitat structures.

Another interesting project Huron Pines finished this summer was on the Ocqueoc River. The Ocqueoc River, near its confluence with Lake Huron, is characterized by tall sandy banks on the bends of large meanders. Natural Resources Conservation Service staff worked with the property owner to design a solution for an eroding site and requested that Huron Pines implement a bank stabilization project using Large Woody Debris. The trees were placed along the toe of the bank of one of these large bluffs. Trees used in this fashion help curtail erosion by buffering the water flows, thereby reducing the stream's energy along the bank.



Above: Members of the Restoration Crew install a LUNKER structure on the Au Sable River. LUNKER structures serve two purposes: to control erosion by stabilizing the toe and bank of the river and to provide habitat for fish and other aquatic animals.

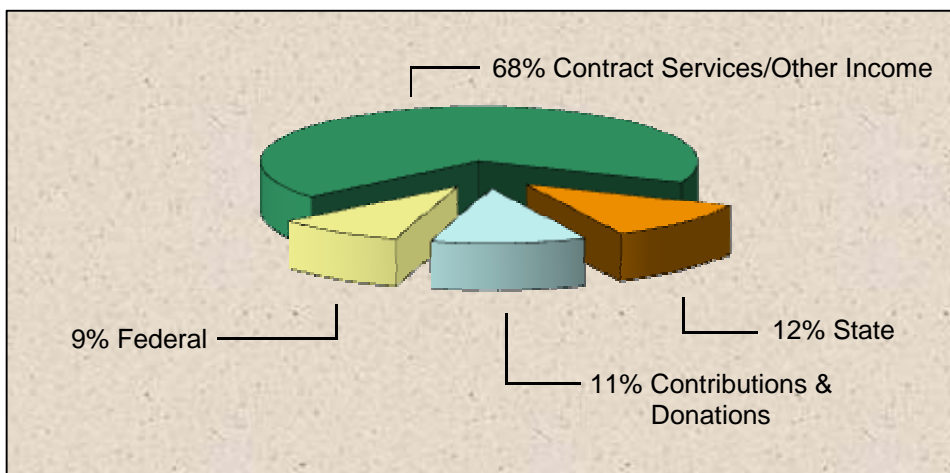


Members from Paul Young and Mason-Griffith Founders Chapters of Trout Unlimited along with Huron Pines staff repair the Wakeley Bridge Landing. Erosion resulting from parking lot runoff created a gully to the river. In addition to the stream stabilization, partners made the site handicap accessible. Funding for the site work was provided by Crawford County.

Below: The completed LUNKER with additional bank stabilization practices, including terracing, revegetation and the placement of a mulch blanket.

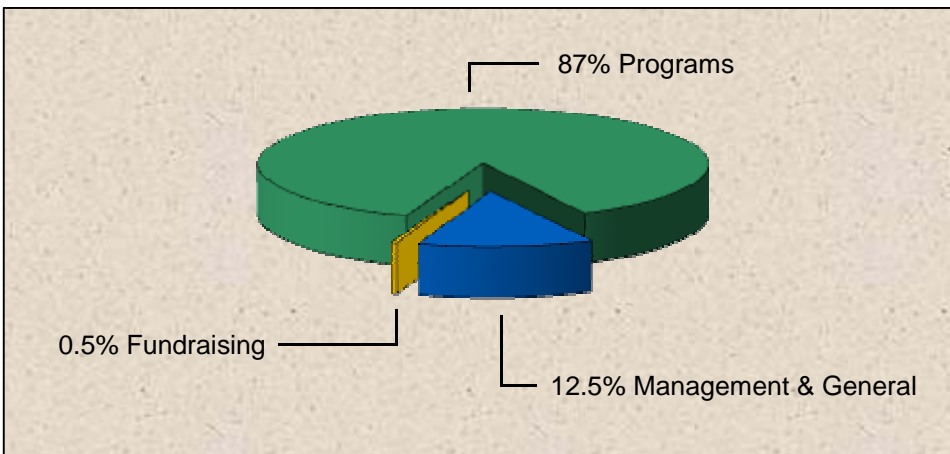


Sources of Funds



Contract Services/Other Income	\$840,000
State	\$146,000
Contributions & Donations	\$143,000
Federal	\$117,000

Uses of Funds



Programs	\$1,061,000
Management & General	\$180,000
Fundraising	\$5,000

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[Website](http://www.huronpines.org)

www.huronpines.org

Huron Pines is independently audited each year.
Audited financial statements and IRS Form 990 are available upon request.

2006 Members

Thank you so much to the people who make our hands-on conservation programs possible – our members. The supporters below allow our organization to do much of the important work you've been reading about on the previous pages.

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 Upper Manistee River Association
 Wade Trim
 Warbler's Hideaway Association
 Paul H. Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited

In Memory Of:

Millard J. Albers from James and Laurice Albers
 George Bentley from Anonymous
 Gaye Campbell from Amy Caswell on behalf of Carolyn, Brittany and Corey
 O.B. and Evelyn Eustis from Howard and Geneva French
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 Nina Liverance from Brent and Lorna Mosley
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 Mary McCarthy from Patrick and Judith Benson
 James and Sally Rudy from Glenn B. Rudy
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In Honor Of:

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 Dan Sikarskie from Rob and Sue Morley

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 supporting our membership program.

Special Thanks to our
 Mailing Volunteers!

Glenda Grix, Lucille Smith,
 Margie Thomson and Ruth Joyce

Volunteers: Thank you to the many people who make our conservation programs possible through their donation of time. By volunteering their time in the field or office, or by taking extra time to share their expertise on projects, our programs run more effectively. Our Board and staff greatly appreciate their involvement.

Bob Andrus	Gerry Lake	Bruce Patrick	Steve Southard
Roger Carlin	Ed Lamb	Paul H. Young Chapter	Bob Spence
Tom Carlson	Roger Love	of Trout Unlimited	Gene Stagner
John Dallas	Bruce Marshall	Carole Plunkey	Dan Stock
Ken Dennings	Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter	Abby Porter	Don Theisen
Rusty Gates	of Trout Unlimited	Presque Isle Academy	Liz Wade
Dan and Cheryl Gauthier	Terry Moulthane	Pam Rohr	Ned Wickes
Laura Hansmann	Dave Nadolsky	Ralph Rucinski	The River Conservation and
Ed Hoover	Onaway Area Community	Bud Slingerlend	Fishing Camp sponsored by
Howard Johnson	Schools—5th Grade	Jerry Smith	the Kalamazoo Valley
Joe Kutkuhn	Dick Pastula	Dave Smrchek	Chapter of Trout Unlimited.

New Board Members

This past fall, Huron Pines was pleased to add John Walters to the Board of Directors. John filled an at-large vacancy on the Board and brings a great interest in the outdoors and a ton of enthusiasm. He is the current President of the Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited and also serves on the Board of HeadWaters Land Conservancy. John is helping Huron Pines raise project funds and reach out to partners in the fly fishing community.



John Walters

As HP added programs and staff this past year, it was apparent that the Board needed more help as well. In addition to governing the organization, our volunteer Board of Directors reviews project proposals, helps to raise funds, conducts outreach to the public and, with project partners, utilizes three standing committees to accomplish the work. At the organization's Full Council meeting last September, the Full Council sponsors of the organization (Conservation Districts and County Boards of Commissioners) voted to change the bylaws and allow for 11 Board Members, an addition of two new at-large positions. Huron Pines was fortunate to be able to add Jerry Rucker and Vicki Springstead to fill those new openings.

Jerry is a marketing professional who likes to spend his free time fishing the North Branch Au Sable River. He is a Board Member of the North Branch Association and is also the group's former President. Jerry is helping Huron Pines with promotional materials and is working to implement watershed management efforts in the Au Sable.



Jerry Rucker

Vicki is Vice Chair of the Higgins Lake Foundation and has been active in many different projects with Huron Pines to protect Higgins Lake. Her knack for organizing special events and her enthusiasm for water resource protection projects make her a great addition to the Board.



Vicki Springstead

This organization is an equal opportunity provider.

Huron Pines is a not-for-profit, non-governmental, 501(c)(3) organization serving Alcona, Alpena, Cheboygan, Crawford, Iosco, Montmorency, Ogemaw, Oscoda, Otsego, Presque Isle and Roscommon counties.



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