

# Huron Pines

*Conserving the Forests, Lakes and Streams of Northeast Michigan*

2014 Annual Report





# About Huron Pines

# Letter from Our Leadership

## Our Mission

Huron Pines' mission is to conserve the forests, lakes and streams of Northeast Michigan.

## Our Role

Huron Pines' role is to coordinate large-scale river restoration, watershed management, conservation leadership and land stewardship projects. We engage partners from local communities, state and federal government and regional interest groups to identify and implement projects that have the most environmental and community benefits for Northeast Michigan.

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At the center of the Great Lakes Watershed, home to the planet's largest source of available fresh water, sits Northeast Michigan. It's a rural region that has seen its share of hard times, with frequent local debates of how much we should protect natural resources versus how much to use them. It's a process that often places the economy and environment, as well as short- and long-term thinking, at odds with one another.

In developing our own strategic goals and desired outcomes at Huron Pines, we operated from the belief that success comes from lifting up and improving our communities, stewarding our land and water resources, and enhancing our regional economy. We're working to build and improve upon projects that reflect all three values—our region's triple bottom line.

Without protecting the environment, there is no chance for long-term economic success. Conversely, it would be impossible to maintain our natural resource and recreational values without a stronger economy in this region—local support would not be there to help ensure protection of all the special places. And that would be ruinous, as our quality of life and our culture is built on our natural resources and all they offer.

The great news is that our region is well-positioned for the future. Northeast Michigan is very fortunate in what it has to offer: world-class trout streams, fantastic Great Lakes shoreline, unique and abundant wildlife, great hunting and fishing, large tracts of forestland, special features like our sinkholes, and access to these resources for everyone through vast public lands.

The quality of our natural resources directly affects the quality of life in our communities. Continual improvements in technology and transportation create more opportunities for younger people to move where they want to live than at anytime in the past. This trend will benefit communities in Northeast Michigan: our natural resources will draw people who want to live near them, and our challenge is to cultivate a stewardship ethic and sense of place for those newcomers to our communities.

As we all move forward together for the good of Northeast Michigan and the Great Lakes Region, we ask you to work with us in continually advancing ideas to achieve good for communities; good for the economy; and great for conserving the forests, lakes and streams of Northeast Michigan.

**—Connie Schrieber, Chair**  
**—Brad Jensen, Executive Director**





# Our Action Plan

In 2014, Huron Pines presented a set of regional conservation goals to our funders, partners and members. Their input helped us to formulate a list of strategic activities for the years 2015–2020 that will lead us to the conservation outcomes we think will make Northeast Michigan a better place to live, work and enjoy for generations to come.



## Indicators of Success

- Within 40 years, achieve zero total/partial body contact advisories for waterbodies in our region.
- Five-year user surveys show more users near restored sites.
- Watershed nutrient reduction to 25% of pre-project levels.
- Biological surveys of fish and aquatic macroinvertebrates show improvement or no negative change in community condition.
- Identify gaps in biological and physical knowledge about our watersheds.

- An increase each year in the number of weed-free acres.
- Identify increases in habitat along priority corridors.
- Number of landowners completing projects through cost-share assistance or technical guidance from site visits.
- Choose keystone species and show how much of its habitat is protected or improved through projects.
- Number of current forest stewardship management plans increases each year.

- Develop and utilize at least 4 broad-based pledge/partnership-style agreements.
- Facilitate programmatic partner roundtables and community conversations.
- Maintain and review annually the project mega-list.
- Achieve diversified non-government financial support.
- Show an increase in recurring large donations and graduations to our legacy program or endowment funds.

- Host two major community conversations each year.
- Sense of place approach is built into our outreach materials
- Number of non-traditional partners/user groups increases each year.
- Number of community and government partners engaged through project tours.
- More townships adopting voluntary riparian protection ordinances.
- By 2020, program is available and readily accessible to all school districts.
- Each school district has at least one class enrolled in the region's place-based education program.

## Regional Outcome

Water infrastructure supports recreational, economic and environmental uses and values.  
 Drinking water is safe and available.  
 Aquatic and riparian ecosystems are resilient and self-sustaining.  
 Monitoring systems enable us to understand and manage water resources.

A well-coordinated Cooperative Weed Management Area program engages regional partners.  
 Key wildlife corridors are identified and managed in a way that sustains wildlife communities.  
 Stewardship assistance is provided to landowners.  
 Rare, threatened and endangered species and natural communities are protected.  
 Forest health and economic benefits of management are a part of a thriving regional economy.

A well-connected regional conservation partner network balances ecological and economic needs.  
 Conservation priorities and sites guide future efforts.  
 A stable model of funding is in place that focuses on regional self-reliance.

Economic and community development projects recognize connections between natural assets and sense of place.  
 Management practices recognize the land-water-people connection.  
 Individuals and units of government understand their responsibility and make informed decisions regarding conservation of our natural resources.  
 Place-based education programming is provided to all school districts within the region.

## Conservation Goal

**Improved Water Quality**

**Increased Quality Forest Management**

**Leadership and Coordination**

**Integrated Community Conservation Ethic**



# On the Ground and In the Water

**Our technical staff strives to bundle projects that restore all aspects of a watershed—land, water and wildlife. We work with landowners of all sizes and backgrounds to make sure the best projects are completed to protect the places we love in Northeast Michigan.**



## Thunder Bay River Watershed

This year capped off a three-year project beginning in 2012 to reconnect 145 miles of tributaries to the Thunder Bay River through the replacement of 10 road/stream crossings, funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Sustain Our Great Lakes Program.

Through a partnership with North American Hydro to monitor the river near the major hydropower dams in the watershed, Huron Pines stabilized five eroding streambanks along a recreation and beach area used exclusively by retired and active duty military personnel. Stabilizing these sites with coconut logs, whole trees and native vegetation addressed bank instability and aesthetics while leaving sandy areas open for critical turtle nesting habitat. This approach combines the mutual goals of conservation and recreation so that these resources can be enjoyed for many years to come.

## Protecting Sinkhole Lakes in the Pigeon River Country State Forest

This two-year restoration effort at five of the sinkhole lakes in the Pigeon River Country State Forest was initiated to develop a sustainable path along the steep approaches to each of these lakes. Constructing each of the pathways required a huge investment of volunteer labor and community support and gave Huron Pines and the DNR the opportunity to share the unique features with many northern Michigan residents.



## Reconnecting the Black River Watershed in Alcona County

Huron Pines continued efforts in the Black River Watershed to remove priority fish passage barriers. In 2014, two crossings were improved on Haynes Creek, a tributary to the Black River. These two improvements together open more than seven miles of headwater habitat for aquatic organism passage from Lake Huron. This project will be completed in 2015 with the replacement of an additional road/stream crossing.



## Northern Saginaw Bay Restoration Initiative

The Northern Saginaw Bay Restoration Initiative aims to improve water quality and strengthen communities in the Rifle, Au Gres and Tawas river watersheds. In 2014, we improved 5 road/stream crossings to reconnect more than 17 upstream miles of aquatic habitat. We also worked with private landowners and agricultural producers to reduce streambank erosion and runoff from farmlands. Huron Pines and partners treated 20 acres of invasive phragmites along the Lake Huron coast, and staff completed the Rifle River Watershed Management Plan, which will provide a framework for regional restoration projects in the future.

## Au Sable River Watershed

In 2014, Huron Pines launched a targeted effort throughout the Au Sable River Watershed resulting in new instream habitat on the West Branch of Big Creek, 130 acres of invasive species management, and stabilization of 9 streambanks on the South Branch Pine River.

We also continued developing two key East Branch Au Sable restoration projects: one at the Grayling Hatchery and one on West Karen Lake Road. The completion of these projects will reconnect 28 miles of the East Branch and its tributaries.





# Community Enrichment

**Strong partnerships enable our projects to meet the individual needs of each community we serve. Huron Pines helps people reconnect with the outdoors through community events and programs that bring people together to celebrate and protect the natural world.**

## Ambassadors for Conservation

Keeping in touch with the huge array of groups and local resource issues can be a challenge with such a large service area. The Huron Pines Ambassadors are those key volunteers who go above and beyond in supporting our work and mission in the communities where they live. Our Ambassadors have diverse backgrounds and interests and add value to our projects by providing technical input, sharing their special skills and helping us make local connections.



## Atlanta Stewardship Center

Huron Pines is managing the completion of a feasibility study to assess the costs, revenue streams and tourism market associated with retrofitting and redeveloping the historic school building in Atlanta, MI as an environmental education and conference center. The school building is in the heart of Northeast Michigan—a prime location to become a tourism hub connected to other destinations, like the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary in Alpena, by our region's vast trail systems.



## Rose City Stormwater

The Rose City stormwater project featured a combination of rain gardens, streambank erosion control, and urban stormwater filtering that now treats 120 acres of the city's stormwater runoff, which formerly flowed directly into Houghton Creek, a high-quality tributary of the Rifle River. Through volunteer events and close partnership with city officials, this group of projects is a showcase for stormwater treatment techniques in rural communities. The project's completion was celebrated with an official ribbon cutting ceremony during a city-wide festival in October.



## Kirtland's Warbler Initiative

The formation of the Kirtland's Warbler Alliance jumped ahead in 2014 with the election of group leadership and initiatives to increase the profile of the nation's rarest songbird from local communities to the state legislature. The Alliance members and Huron Pines worked together with the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team to implement special tours, educational curricula, and economic linkages throughout the warbler's breeding area in Northeast Michigan.



## Huron Pines AmeriCorps

Each year, our AmeriCorps members expand the reach of the program in unexpected and positive ways. This year, we saw an increase in environmental education impacts throughout northern Michigan, including presentations and field trips for elementary students to learn about the Kirtland's warbler, establishing a high school erosion and water quality monitoring program on a Pigeon River preserve, expanding the Great Lakes Stewardship Initiative to more schools, involving students in invasive species identification and treatment and many more. By reconnecting students with the many wonderful natural resources in northern Michigan, the members' impacts will continue to grow as more students go on to pursue careers in the sciences or continue to implement stewardship principles on family property in the area.



Visit

[www.huronpines.org](http://www.huronpines.org)  
for more detailed updates  
on all of our projects.



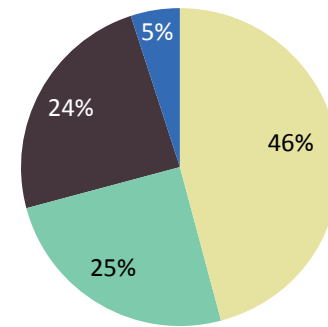
Many of our 2014 federal grants originated in **Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI)** and other Great Lakes-related funding initiatives. The immense impact of the national focus on our freshwater resources will be felt for years.

To show the importance of continuing funding these programs at a national level, Huron Pines invited state and national legislators to tour some of our projects and special places. They were able to see the economic and ecological effects that Great Lakes funding has on local lakes, rivers, forests and communities.

**Now, more than ever, we have the opportunity to leverage local dollars to bring major outside funding to Northeast Michigan to protect our natural resources.**

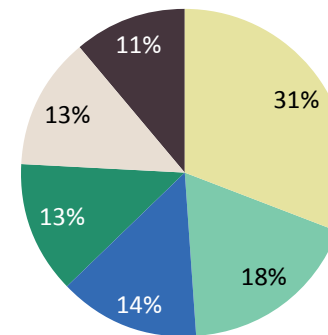


Expenses by Major Program



- Kirtland's Warbler Initiative
- Land Stewardship
- Community Enrichment & AmeriCorps
- Watershed Restoration

Program Expenses by Geography



- Cheboygan River Watershed
- Thunder Bay River Watershed
- Statewide
- Au Sable River Watershed
- Lake Huron Coastal Watershed
- Saginaw Bay Watershed

Statement of Income and Expenses

	2014	2013	2012
<b>Revenues</b>			
Annual Giving	\$46,883	\$46,895	\$42,795
Contributions	<b>333,757</b>	354,574	109,315
Contractual Services	184,755	104,586	103,714
Federal Grants	1,350,646	1,155,288	1,918,588
State Grants	43,405	34,817	223,101
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$1,959,446</b>	<b>\$1,696,160</b>	<b>\$2,397,513</b>
<b>Expenses</b>			
Program Expenses	\$1,615,306	\$1,400,167	\$2,160,402
Management Expenses	306,389	325,542	251,837
Fundraising Expenses	58,353	33,943	10,032
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,980,048</b>	<b>\$1,759,652</b>	<b>\$2,422,271</b>
<b>Change in Net Assets</b>	<b>\$-20,602</b>	<b>\$-63,492</b>	<b>\$-24,758</b>

2014 figures are projections for January 1 to December 31, 2014.  
 2013 figures are audited financials for January 1 to December 31, 2013.  
 2012 figures are audited financials for January 1 to December 31, 2012.



Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation



The Morley Foundation



The Elizabeth, Allan, & Warren Shelden Foundation

## Major Donors \$20,000+

- The Americana Foundation
- The Carls Foundation
- Great Lakes Commission
- Great Lakes Fishery Trust
- National Fish and Wildlife Foundation
- Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN)
- The Elizabeth, Allan, & Warren Shelden Foundation

## \$5,000+

- Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation
- Bay Area Community Foundation
- The Conservation Fund
- County of Crawford
- DTE Energy Foundation
- Herrick Foundation
- ITC Holdings Corp.
- Morley Foundation
- Mullett Lake Area Preservation Society
- Muskegon River Watershed Assembly
- North American Hydro

## Watershed Champions \$2,500 - \$4,999

- Au Sable River Property Owners Association
- Community Foundation for Northeast Michigan
- Community Endowment Fund
- Mr. and Mrs. O.B. Eustis Memorial Fund
- Northeast Michigan Council of Governments
- Otsego County Community Foundation
- Scott and Janice Lampert Fund
- Community Fund
- Deerfield Computer Associates Fund
- Plum Creek Foundation

## River Patrons \$1,000 - \$2,499

- Ann Arbor Trout Unlimited
- Audubon Society of Kalamazoo
- Au Sable River Watershed Committee
- Eric Bankhead and Connie Schrieber
- Gregory and Cecilia Bator
- Kim W. and Carol Morley Beck
- Captain Planet Foundation
- Tom Cook and Anna Owens
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- William and Linda Demmer
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- Pine River-Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition
- Jerry and Fran Rucker
- Jeffrey Twyman
- William B. Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited
- Upper Black River Council

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- Viking Energy of Lincoln
- Jack and Liz Wade
- Neil Wallace
- Gail Walter
- Garrett and Bonnie Walworth





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**In Memory Of**  
Bonnie and Bing Benghauser from Karl Benghauser  
Burt Bowerman from Marshall and Amy Stevens  
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Carlos Fetterolf from David and Nancy Neal  
Bob and Barb Grant from Ken and Susan Hirth  
Robert and Barbara Grant from Bob and Karla Grant  
All the Kirtland's Warbler Recovery Team Members and Associates who came before us and laid the foundation to recovery from Carol Bocetti  
Kolby from Benjamin Duby  
Joe Kutkuhn from Roger and Mary Fechner  
Jessie Mae Marcotte from Joe Marcotte  
Dr. Daniel McGeen from Phillip Couture  
Sadie Lunden Miller from Herman and Dorothy Miller





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  - Ogemaw County Road  
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  - Oscoda County Road  
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LLC

### Agency Funders



Almost all Huron Pines projects span multiple years and blend the talents of multiple staff members. This provides continuity and stability in striving toward our overall conservation goals as an organization. The following are just a few of the new projects that we began developing in 2014 that will carry us forward in 2015 and beyond.

### Rifle Prosperity Network

The watersheds in the Northern Saginaw Bay have received hundreds of thousands of dollars in funding over the past five years to improve water quality and restore habitat on land and in the water. In this follow-up project, we will bring together economic and conservation community leaders to develop the Rifle River Watershed as a premier destination for work, life and play. The first step is a marketing plan that capitalizes on the unique natural features of the region while still ensuring the character of the Rifle River Watershed remains intact.



### Buhl Dam Removal

Several years ago, members of the Pine River-Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition showed our staff Buhl Dam, an old concrete structure on the South Branch of the Pine near some of the watershed's priority streambank erosion sites. Working with the U.S. Forest Service and local partners, we are developing plans and raising funds to remove this structure and reconnect 10 miles of upstream habitat to our newly improved streambanks and the greater Au Sable River Watershed.



### Song of the Morning Dam

Work will continue at the Song of the Morning Dam, with the final structure replacement scheduled for summer 2015 after nearly a year of letting the Pigeon River recover its natural flow and streambank vegetation in the previously impounded area.



### Pigeon River Wildlife Habitat and Oil and Gas Reclamation

A new project to improve a 75-acre complex of open lands for wildlife in the Pigeon River Country State Forest will include the removal of invasive species, planting a native prairie and restoring abandoned oil and gas wells so that they can become a functioning part of the forest habitat as well as an example for oil and gas well site restoration throughout Northeast Michigan.



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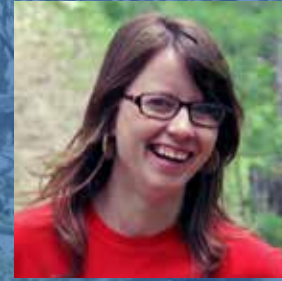
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