

Huron Pines

Building partnerships to meet community and resource conservation needs throughout Northeast Michigan

www.huronpines.org

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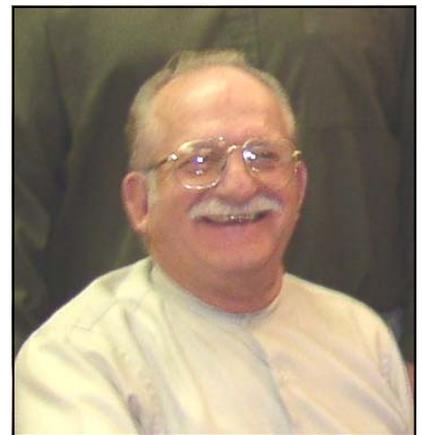
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The Huron Pines RC&D Program is about working with others to achieve more than one individual or group could possibly accomplish alone. In 2005, Huron Pines RC&D is pleased to recognize three people who not only understand the importance of that mission, but have successfully used it to benefit Northeast Michigan. In addition to our tribute to Richard Karsen below, see pages 3 and 8 for stories on two other resource leaders in Northeast Michigan.

Huron Pines Chairman Receives National Honor

We're pleased to announce that Richard A. Karsen, a member of the Huron Pines Executive Board for 25 years, including the last 20 as Chair, has been elected into the National RC&D Hall of Fame. His induction, in Washington D.C. in March of this year, is an honor that reflects years of selfless dedication and commitment. Most of our members, sponsors and partners already know Richard, who lives with his wife Ann in Alcona County. In addition to helping guide the RC&D Program, Richard serves both as a board member for the County Road Commission and as a Pastor for his community. Richard has a knack for handling the most difficult of problems smoothly and his wealth of experience has made him very effective in serving as the Board Chair, helping the organization grow and meet changing needs in the region we serve.



Richard's efforts to work with legislators and other RC&D Councils across the nation helped bring about the recognition and funding that the RC&D Program needed to survive. His efforts paid off when the RC&D Program was permanently authorized by the U.S. Congress in 2002, allowing more RC&D councils to thrive and more projects to be completed than ever before.

Emerging Projects Program is Set to Launch...

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All of the major projects at Huron Pines began the same way...a community need or resource problem was identified and a mix of stakeholders were brought in to develop and implement solutions. While many of these fledgling committees and partnerships eventually grew into multi-year projects with support from the private and public sectors, they all started with one thing in common: No funding.

That can be discouraging, but these “emerging projects” will come to fruition if partners and sponsors make a commitment to see them through. Huron Pines RC&D often gets involved because groups of diverse partners typically need technical, financial or administrative assistance to help them get started—fulfilling this need is the primary function of our organization.

Typically these developing projects require a good deal of staff time to set up and generally have little or no funding at the time Huron Pines becomes involved. Thus, while they are essential for our organization and important for resource conservation in Northeast Michigan, they also represent our organization’s largest non-reimbursable expense. Promoting this program, and raising the funds necessary to conduct it properly, will help Huron Pines continue to be a sustainable organization while better serving our stakeholders—you—in the years to come.

Projects from the past year, where funding was not in place but volunteers and local leaders came to us with a good idea, include the Stormwater Project for West Branch, Fletcher Pond Eurasian Watermilfoil, Rogers City Stormwater Study, a number of road-stream crossing projects, the Sod Dock initiative on the Au Sable River, and the Grayling Farmers Market. In 2005, we will see many, if not all, of these project ideas come to fruition. These successes provide our board and staff the confidence to know that the next round of new ideas can also develop into on-the-ground projects which benefit Northeast Michigan.

In the months to come, we will work with our sponsors to establish the Emerging Projects program. *We feel funding for this program is the most effective use of contributed dollars from outside sources*, as it allows Huron Pines to develop important new projects that would otherwise never get implemented.

We ask that you contribute to this program by including a donation in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your consideration.



Milfoil Weevil



If you traveled in northern Michigan this past year you were undoubtedly passed by a maroon Dodge mini-van making its way along the roads. That Dodge, with worn tire treads, belongs to Linda Jo Klemens. Linda, along with her husband Craig, has spent countless hours volunteering to trek around the region and tell the story of Fletcher Pond.

Fletcher Pond is widely known as a premier fishing and bird watching paradise. Whether you prefer to silently scan the lake with a pair of binoculars looking for osprey, eagles, and loons; or you're in search of that 6 pound bass hidden by the stumps of the lake, Fletcher Pond is sure to please the outdoor enthusiast.

A representative of the Thunder Bay Audubon Society, Linda has traveled the circuit explaining about the birds, fish and people who depend on Fletcher Pond. The story is a good one – Fletcher Pond is both an important ecological resource and a mainstay for the local economy. Yet its aquatic ecosystem is being entirely disrupted by the invasive nuisance species known as Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM). The weed chokes native vegetation, wraps around boat motors, and disrupts the ecological balance of the lake. Realizing this, Linda organized the Fletcher Pond Improvement Association; a group comprised of resort owners, concerned citizens and resource professionals with a mission of developing a long term management approach to control EWM in the lake. This year's goal is to raise \$40,000 to release 12,000 milfoil-eating weevils into Fletcher Pond.

“Linda Jo has provided the guidance, energy, enthusiasm and legwork needed to organize and motivate the improvement association which will ultimately protect Fletcher Pond and its valuable resources. It has been a real pleasure working with Linda over the past few years,” Huron Pines Watershed Coordinator Lisha Ramsdell remarked. Because of Linda's efforts to tirelessly work on the Fletcher Pond project, she has been chosen as this year's recipient of the Huron Pines Award.

The Huron Pines Award is given annually by the Executive Board to the group or individual that best

Weevil Woman Receives Big Award

exemplifies the purpose of the RC&D Program. At the heart of the organization's mission is grassroots work with local communities to identify resource problems, bring together diverse partners to develop a response, and implement a practical solution.

By organizing the Fletcher Pond Improvement Association, pulling in key partners, conducting public education sessions to review the problem and potential solutions, and working endlessly to take the message across the region Linda Jo Klemens is the perfect choice for the award.



Past recipients of the Huron Pines Award include:

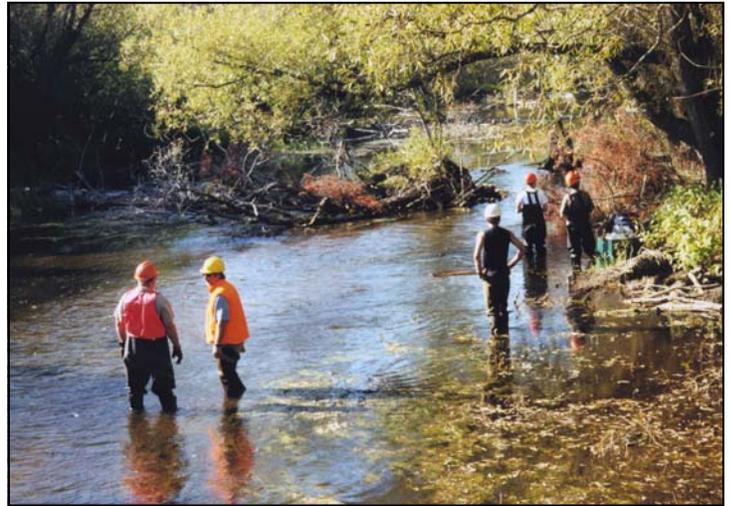
- 2004 Ken Dennings, Higgins Lake
Eurasian Watermilfoil Control
- 2003 Steve Southard, Grayling
Stormwater Committee
- 2002 Au Sable North Branch Area
Association
- 2001 Community Foundation for
Northeast Michigan
- 2000 Otsego County Road Commission
- 1999 Evergreen Recycling
- 1998 George W. Mason Chapter, TU
- 1997 Anglers of the Au Sable
- 1996 Montmorency Conservation Club
- 1995 Howard Haselschwardt, Northwest
Design Group
- 1994 Montmorency Conservation
District
- 1993 Challenge Chapter, TU

Au Sable River Large Woody Debris

Photo Courtesy of Steve Ferguson

The Main Branch of the Au Sable River will be the focus of this year's Large Woody Debris habitat enhancement project. During the next three years, 2005-2007, Huron Pines RC&D, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, and the Au Sable River Watershed Restoration Committee will be enhancing the instream habitat by placing/creating large woody debris structures within the Main Branch of the Au Sable River.

Large Woody Debris (LWD) was once a common site within most Northern Michigan rivers and streams. Early logging practices removed fallen trees and log jams from the stream in order to transport saw logs downstream to lumber mills. Logging activity also harvested the majority of timber within the river corridor preventing the future recruitment of natural occurring large woody debris. The second wave of LWD removal took place when recreational watercraft became a common site on our streams. Rivers were cleared of LWD to ensure paddlers could navigate the waters. Today, we have incorporated better management practices when it comes to logging adjacent to streams, and area canoe liveries are working with resource agencies to balance the need for navigable waters with the need for LWD in our river systems.



Above: The River Crew awaits the next tree to be flown in by helicopter on the North Branch of the Au Sable River.

Below: Brad Jensen, Huron Pines Executive Director, caught in action as he hooks a tree to the helicopter.

Large Woody Debris, in the form of whole trees, is a vital component of a healthy aquatic ecosystem in Northern Michigan streams. These structures provide the necessary cover for trout, prey fish, aquatic mammals, and various other organisms in the stream as well as creating the necessary matrix of structure and nutrients that fosters a healthy food chain. Most importantly, LWD structures create diversity within the river system by creating riffles, scour holes, and calm slack waters. Properly placed large woody debris structures can also deflect water away from vulnerable streambanks and help protect them from erosion activities.



Photo Courtesy of Steve Ferguson

North Branch LWD Synopsis: 2002-2004

-  20 miles of river enhanced
-  Over 4,800 trees placed in river
-  Over 800 structures created
-  150 hours of helicopter flight time
-  Led by Ken Reed, the river crew worked over 7,000 hours on the river

Northern Michigan Road-Stream Crossings



Road-stream crossings can be a major contributor of large quantities of sediment to Northern Michigan rivers. The majority of secondary roads or “backroads” are unpaved or graveled roads. Some backroads are maintained year-round while others are seasonal forest roads. Many of these roads cross small tributaries and feeder streams where large amounts of road-gravel and sand are deposited into the water during precipitation events. Tributary streams provide crucial habitat for various trout species, prey fish, and insect communities. Excessive amounts of sediment entering tributary streams can result in a wider and shallower river channel, the destruction of fish and aquatic insect habitat, and the elevation of the river’s water temperature.



Above: This timber bridge in Cheboygan County was completed Winter 2003. This project improved fish passage and reduced the amount of sediment entering the stream.



Above: This picture illustrates the amount of sediment that can be deposited during precipitation events. This crossing in Otsego County will be addressed Fall 2005.

Such detrimental changes can appear to happen slowly over time and are subtle enough to go unnoticed for some time. Over time the stream can become severely degraded and is extremely difficult (and expensive) to restore.

Minimizing these effects before they become severe is the first and most important step in addressing the sedimentation of our rivers and streams. Over the years, Huron Pines has partnered with numerous County Road Commissions to implement Best Management Practices to improve road-stream crossing conditions in Northern Michigan. Huron Pines will be working with the Roscommon, Otsego, Presque Isle, and Montmorency County Road Commissions to complete four road-stream crossing improvement projects in 2005.

Meet Huron Pines Newest Staff Member

Huron Pines welcomes Nicole Kovar as the newest staff member. Nicole is the Watershed Planner for the Upper Manistee River and hails from Engadine in the Upper Peninsula. She graduated from MSU with her B.S. in Fisheries and Wildlife Management. Nicole comes to us from the DNR Fisheries Division where she spent three seasons gaining valuable knowledge and experience in fisheries and limnological research techniques. Her training and education make her an excellent addition to the Huron Pines team. **Welcome, Nicole!**



Partners—The Key to Successful Projects

With more resource problems and funding tighter than ever, strong partnerships are essential for implementing important projects. In the months to come, the HP board and staff will be working in several different watersheds to strengthen our partnerships to effectively tackle resource challenges in Northeast Michigan.

Upper Au Sable Watershed

In the Au Sable River System, many habitat improvement projects have been done through the years by numerous conservation groups and resource agencies. The lack of an organized public outreach and education program in this watershed resulted in Huron Pines applying for and receiving a grant through the Clean Michigan Initiative program to help us work with these groups. Perhaps the biggest success thus far has been the opportunity to reinforce our relationship with the Upper Au Sable River Preservation Association (formerly the Property Owners Association).

Huron Pines staff worked with the Preservation Association to develop an education outreach action plan. At their January 15th meeting the group adopted the education recommendations into their Strategic Plan. Components of the education plan include:

- Workshops for riparian landowners
- Distribution of an educational newsletter
- Outreach to local government units
- Promotion of environmentally friendly landscapers and contractors
- Development of materials for realtors to distribute to new property owners

Through the group's local connections, enthusiasm and good will of volunteers, and with help from Huron Pines' staff, even more people will be reached.



Dave Waltz and Nicole Kovar with students from Grayling Middle School during World Water Monitoring Day.

Pine River-Van Etten Lake (PRVEL)

Every coalition evolves differently and we hope that each finds the structure that works best for them. In the PRVEL Watershed, partners came together in 2001-2003 to complete a watershed management plan. While the hoped-for funding to implement large scale projects is yet to be obtained, several smaller projects have been completed. In order to help the Coalition be more effective, Huron Pines was asked by watershed representatives to develop a new partnership agreement. Once adopted, the partnership will work with Huron Pines to establish a fund designated for watershed projects, streamline administration of Coalition work tasks, and move projects forward with a greater sense of urgency.

Presque Isle Conservation District

One of the services Huron Pines provides is help with strategic planning and organizational development. Over several months, Huron Pines RC&D Coordinator Kathleen Ryan facilitated a series of meetings with the Presque Isle Conservation District Board of Directors aimed at helping them to identify future resource needs and determine how they could best meet those needs. As this process continues and the District develops new projects, we look forward to working with them and the many partners in Presque Isle County.

Upper Black River Restoration Committee

The committee is looking to its individual partners, of which Huron Pines is one, to update their partnership agreement and develop a short- and long-range action plan. Much work has been done through the years, and with the continued involvement of groups like the Montmorency Conservation Club, Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council, conservation districts, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, Headwaters Chapter of TU, DNR Fisheries Division, NRCS, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, it should continue.

Finding Better Ways to Manage Stormwater

One of our core programs for protecting water quality is the proper management of stormwater runoff. Northeast Michigan has communities built along rivers where polluted runoff impacts water quality. Fortunately, the problems in our region are still small enough to handle. As the region continues to develop, it's vital that practices and policies are put in place to prevent further degradation of water resources.

Larger downstate communities are now required to develop stormwater management plans. In our less populated area, that's not the case. However, with the type of river systems (high quality, coldwater resources fed primarily by groundwater inputs) and the fact that business owners, community leaders and residents recognize the importance of their river for their city or village, we hope to turn this understanding into the application of Best Management Practices within communities in order to treat existing problems and prevent future ones.



In **Grayling**, Huron Pines is working with the City on a complete retrofit of the storm drain system. The city has recently adopted a runoff control ordinance and designs are complete for an approach that directs street runoff to rain gardens where it will infiltrate the soils and uses detention basins and oil/grit separators to treat remaining stormwater. Funding through the Clean Michigan Initiative in the amount of \$758,000 is being matched with \$127,000 from the city and an equal amount from conservation partners.

In **Rogers City**, through the initiative of the City Council, Huron Pines staff will conduct a scoping study to determine the extent of stormwater impacts on Lake Huron and recommend solutions to community leaders. A grant through the Coastal Management Program was recently awarded to Huron Pines and the stormwater study will begin in March 2005.

In **West Branch**, the Ogemaw Conservation District has brought together the City, MSU Extension, County Planning officials, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Department of Environmental Quality, and Huron Pines RC&D staff to begin planning a project similar to the one in Grayling. Community leaders recognize the time is now to encourage practices which will benefit the Rifle River for years to come.

In **Mio**, the Oscoda Conservation District and local residents asked for help with their stormwater runoff problem impacting the Au Sable River. Through cooperation with the Michigan Department of Transportation and local groups, we hope to minimize the runoff impacts.

In **Cheboygan**, while working with NEMCOG on their watershed management plan, Huron Pines and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council Staff conducted an inventory of storm drains discharging to the Cheboygan River and met with the City Manager and Department of Public Works to review recommended solutions. This year, we will be working with partners to sponsor a stormwater management workshop for contractors, distribute best management practices information to local businesses along the Cheboygan River, and hopefully develop a runoff control demonstration site.

It is very encouraging to see the pro-active, voluntary approach Northeast Michigan is taking to control stormwater runoff and therefore protecting the valuable water resources of the region. As development pressure continues, stormwater management from small construction sites to large communities will be fundamental to preserving the quality of water resources we enjoy in our special part of Michigan.

Joe Kutkuhn Retires from Board Service

The quality of work and reputation of Huron Pines RC&D Council was greatly enhanced due to the ten years of dedicated volunteer service provided by Joseph Kutkuhn, PhD. The Board and Staff wish Joe the best in his recent retirement from Chair of the Huron Pines Natural Resources and Environmental Committee and at-large representative on the Executive Board.

Joe's scientific, technical and political expertise went a long way toward establishing Huron Pines' credibility in the eyes of the public and our many partners. After he retired from the US Fish and Wildlife Service he moved back to Northern Michigan and actively applied his education and extensive experience to preserving Northern Michigan rivers, benefiting residents and visitors alike. His passionate efforts resulted in significant funding for habitat restoration projects, especially along the Upper Manistee and Au Sable rivers.

With a doctorate in Fishery Management Statistics, Joe spent 30 years with the US Fish & Wildlife Service including tours as Director of Great Lakes Fishery Laboratory in Ann Arbor, MI and Associate Director for Fishery Resources in Washington, DC. He was the recipient of the US Interior Department's Meritorious and Distinguished Service awards.

During his 13 years as Chairman of the Upper Manistee River Restoration Committee, almost two million dollars was spent correcting river bank erosion, reducing streambed sand load and enhancing instream trout habitat. As Chairman of the George Griffith Foundation (founder of Trout Unlimited) he directed a study of stormwater and surface runoff from the City of Grayling that provided the baseline data for the Grayling Stormwater Project. As Vice President and now President of the Upper Manistee River Association, whose activities include education about river ecology and scientific management, including angler surveys for trout population assessment, he was instrumental in obtaining State of Michigan Natural River designation. In 2003, the River Management Society recognized him for Outstanding Contribution to River Management.



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