THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

FALL/WINTER 2010

Why Improve Road/Stream Crossings?

The 'North Branch Au Sable River Watershed Action Plan' dated April 2009 identified sediment as the primary pollutant to the water quality of the Au Sable River. Road/stream crossings are often a conduit for this pollution when excessive soil from roads and/or eroding embankments flows into a stream. Sedimentation is an area of concern in flowing water systems as it directly affects the diverse flora and fauna within the stream.

Patrick Ertel and Lisha Ramsdell from Huron Pines inventory road/stream crossings. Huron Pines has projects to improve crossings in the Pine River Van Etten Lake watershed in Alcona/Iosco Counties and Silver Creek in Presque Isle County.

Excessive sand loads in coldwater streams can have numerous detrimental effects on the ecosystems and the associated fisheries. The most easily recognized impact of sand entering a river is the process by which sand buries the naturally occurring gravel substrates of the stream bottom. As the gravel is buried, several processes are hindered.

* Numerous species of aquatic insects depend on clean gravel substrate. The gravel provides shelter to the juvenile states of these insects.
* Increasing the amount of sand on the river bottom leads to a 'filling in' of the river. The same volume of water is now flowing over a cross-section with less area. With sand continuing to enter the system the river becomes wider and wider, as well as becoming shallower. Decreasing the depth and increasing the width of the river increases the amount of surface area of the water exposed to incoming solar radiation causing the water to become warmer.
* With the river becoming more shallow and wider, in addition to the gravel being buried by the sand, the overall habitat diversity of the affected stretch of stream decreases. It was noted in the 'Au Sable River Assessment, MDNR Fisheries Division' dated March 2001, that the North Branch could benefit from increasing the instream habitat diversity. Over the last ten years much has been done to put large woody debris into the stream to address this issue. Prevention of a reduction in habitat diversity from sand load is equally important.

Huron Pines will use Best Management Practices to improve the road/stream crossing:

* Replace culverts that are too small, poorly aligned or perches with culverts/bridges that will allow more natural stream flow.
* The new structure will either be bottomless or will be placed so they have a natural stream bottom.
* Harden road approaches and stabilize embankments to prevent runoff and sediment loading.
* Revegetate disturbed soils and use proper sediment control structures during construction.

The U. S. Fish and Wildlife grant received by Huron Pines to replace seven road stream crossing, along with engineering for one additional site, on the North Branch is giving us an opportunity to decrease the sand currently entering the river at select sites. To get further information on the grant and review the inventory of road/stream crossing in the North Branch watershed go to www.huronpines.org. From the home page of the Huron Pines web site click on Crawford County which will take you to a list of projects currently in production. Choosing the 'North Branch Au Sable River' projects will link you to information on the Action Plan and the road/stream inventory.

Your support for this program will benefit the river we all enjoy now and for years to come.

Purple Loosestrife by Glen Eberly

Purple Loosestrife (PL) came back with a vengeance in 2010. We are not sure if it was weather related or a growth spurt response to two years of attack on this invasive species.

Here are our results through three years of our program:

Year	Volunteers	Hours Spent	Plants Destroyed
2008	18	87	1,207
2009	16	27	167
2010	16	60	586

Thanks to the many volunteers who worked all eight reaches of the North Branch.

We still have some large patches of PL that will require herbicide treatment in 2011. The DNRE expects to have funding available to treat these large areas.

This is the first year we have used beetles in our attack. Eric Bankhead obtained beetles from Huron Pines and they were released at Kellogg Bridge. We should see the results in the 2011 at that location.

In 2011 we will step up our attack. Two major PL Attack Days will be planned, likely in early July and mid August, depending on blossom timing. Bags will be distributed, central collection and destruction will be provided and we will all be treated to a "Thanks for Digging PL Picnic".

Our program has now spread to the Au Sable Main and South Branches in 2010. And, the Au Sable River Restoration Committee has identified non-native invasive species as a major initiative for the future. Funding will be sought from The Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and PL and non-native phragmities are the primary targets.

Pat Duncanson, river keeper, and her 'bag of invasives'! It is almost bigger then her!

River Keeper Program Update by Eric Bankhead, Network Lead

The first year of the North Branch River Keepers program was a success. Keepers patrolled their Reaches multiple times during the spring, summer, and fall seasons. River Keepers reported on tree falls and LWD jams that were impeding navigation or causing unsafe wading. Impediments were moved by Huron Pines' river crew, funding for in-river maintenance was provided by the Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation.

River Keepers:

* Removed an abandoned (large tear in fiberglass) canoe from river
* A loose DNRE fishing regulations sign was retrieved from the river by a River Keeper and return to the DNRE for reuse
* Keepers evaluated erosion issues with property owners and reported them to Huron Pines and the Au Sable North Branch Water Shed Restoration Committee for inclusion in their erosion survey
* A plume from a bad septic system was reported on 8/1, follow up included a multiple requests for the Crawford County Health Department to investigate, River Keepers informing property owners of problem, discussion with the contractor on issue, and finally we were notified on 10/27, that a permit was issued for a new raised drain field installed on November 12th.
* Many River Keepers cut, pulled, dug, and attempted to inhibit growth of Purple Loose Strife along various Reaches of the North Branch this summer.

As Network Lead, I was asked to speak at the Pine River Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition (PRVEL) October meeting to discuss how we got started, what we do, organization of program, etc.; so word is out that we have a River Keeper Program, that it is providing "hands-on" stewardship of the North Branch and providing a continuing benefit to the river. I'd like to thank each and every River Keeper that was on the river this year for their time and concern for the river.

River Keeper, Debbie Anderson, floated the North Branch regularly and became know for her passion to eradicate loosestrife and identify and address any problems she came across.

Volunteer Day at 'The Ford' by Jerry Rucker

A road crossing that was once a serious source of pollution to the North Branch Au Sable River was closed in 2001 thanks largely to the efforts of Chuck Wheeker a North Branch Association board member. Locally known simply as "the ford," this former threat to the coldwater stream has been healing nicely since its closure. There were however, a few details that needed to be fixed. The time was right on June 26 to take the next step in rehabilitating the stream.

Off road vehicles (ORV) still had the ability to access and cross the river. Rocks that acted as barricades had been moved and needed to be placed back in their intended locations. Finally, the river lacked natural woody debris on its bank.

On Saturday, June 26, fifteen concerned citizens, including Glen Eberly and Jerry Rucker current North Branch board members, gathered to complete the next steps in stream restoration. Woody debris was placed along the banks and in the stream to encourage the stream to continue narrowing back to its original width. Additionally, the woody structures will provide excellent instream habitat to native fish and insects that reside in the stream. Finally, the brush will hopefully discourage the illegal ORV traffic directly across the river and disturbing the healing process.

Volunteers came expecting to get their hands dirty while providing the necessary labor to project this wonderful resource. They were rewarded with just that: lifting and dragging of trees and brush, swinging the sledgehammer to anchor the material, and wading through the organic matter that has settled from the stream where the new streambanks will hopefully form. Everyone celebrated their accomplishment over lunch.

The event which was organized by Huron Pines as part of their 11/11 volunteer program was primarily sponsored by the Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation and Fuller's North Branch Outing Club.

Volunteers, including Jerry Rucker and Glen Eberly from the North Branch Foundation, participate in Huron Pines Volunteer Day to address problems at 'The Ford'.

Membership Update by Bill Ross

WHERE DOES MY MONEY GO?

Our Foundation works with several local and state organizations in support of programs to promote the wise use and conservation of the North Branch Area's natural resources. You can read about several of these programs in this newsletter. Programs we have developed and supported are, the river keepers program, purple loosestrife eradication and several others.

We commissioned Huron Pines to do a North Branch Area watershed assessment. This action plan has given your Foundation an outline of problems and solutions for us to plan programs into the future. We are currently fund raising to support a program to reduce the effect of sand eroding into the river. We also are supporting a program to continue the placement and maintenance of large woody debris in the North Branch.

Our Foundation has a 503 c(3) designation and thus all money contributed is tax deductable. As you are considering your year-end charitable contributions please remember the Au Sable North Branch Area foundation in your giving.

You can help us to promote the programs the Foundation is supporting by telling your friends and neighbors who are not familiar with the Au Sable North Branch Foundation about our organization. New membership brochures were printed this year and will be mailed to anyone interested. If you, your friends or neighbors would like to receive information on the Foundation contact Bill Ross by e-mail, fishermanross@yahoo.com, please provide a name and address for the mailing.

Lisha Ramsdell of Huron Pines along with a helper assessing the condition of a culvert.

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

955 Morley Road, Grayling, MI 49738

A set of four beautifully hand painted wine glasses will be given to those individuals who contribute $1,000 or more.

Here is my (our) contribution to support the Foundation's conservation projects:

Name: _____

Address: _____

_____

Contribution: $_____ **Check enclosed**

Pledge : $_____ **One time 2011**

$_____ **Two Year - 2010 and 2011**

Please return to:

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation
c/o Connie Schrieber
955 Morley Road
Grayling, MI 49738

Au Sable North Branch Foundation is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)(3) not for profit.

Fund Raising Campaign Update by John Dallas

As many of you know, Huron Pines secured a $675,000 total project federal grant to replace seven road/stream crossings in the North Branch watershed. This project when completed will reconnect over 10 river miles for aquatic passage and reduce an estimated 15 tons of sediment from entering the watershed annually. In order for the project to receive $475,000 from the federal government, matching money or in kind services in the amount of $200,000 must be raised. The donated services of the local road commissions who will be assisting with the project, along with staff from Huron Pines, which will make up $150,000 of the match. The balance needed in cash is $50,000. The Au Sable North Branch Foundation has pledged to raise half of the $50,000 and the Angles of the Au Sable have pledged the other half.

In addition, the Anglers of the Au Sable have secured a $25,000 grant from the U. S. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation for placement of Large Woody Debris in the upper stretches of the North Branch. Additional $10,000 in funding would go a long way to completing what is needed in that area. The North Branch Foundation would like to raise the additional money to put toward this project.

Lastly we have signed a contract with Huron Pines to do river maintenance. Ten years ago the Au Sable North Branch Association raised $90,000 to put large woody debris in the North Branch. At that time funds were set aside for annual maintenance. Those funds have been used up and the Foundation is committed to continue to provide maintenance as needed. The River Keepers identified work needing to be done in 2010 in the amount of $434.50. The Foundation would like to have $5,000 on hand to continue to see that needed maintenance can be done.

Your contribution to these projects will help us to accomplish our goal of raising $40,000. The campaign started with the Foundation Board of Director's contribution/pledging $10,200 and, since July, 22 others have make contributions totaling over $10,000. The Foundation is half way to their goal . Your participation can help us to raise 100%. Individuals contributing/pledging $1,000 or more will receive 4 hand painted wine glasses. See page 4 of the newsletter for your contribution/ pledge forms.

May you have a
Happy Holiday Season!

Ken Reed, head of the Huron Pines' river crew, working on North Branch problem areas identified by river keepers this past summer.

A Reminder of the Green Belt Ordinance by Dave Lovell, Zoning Enforcement Officer

Green Belt District, GB (Article V) Lovells Township Zoning Ordinances

Purpose: To provide for the preservation and enhancement of waterways, through regulation of uses and activities within four hundred feet (400) of lakes, rivers and streams.

The DNR has designated the Au Sable River as a "natural river" under the authority of the Natural River Act. This is administered by the DNR. The Natural River Act addresses things such as the allowed number of dwellings and accessory buildings per lot, square foot and height limits, setbacks, docks, pump houses, septic systems, as well as, land alteration, water access, and maintaining a natural vegetation strip along the shores along with the use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers in these areas. These guidelines and rules apply to residential, commercial and recreational properties.

Lovells Township wishes to include waterfront protection regulations around the West, Middle and East Branches of Big Creek, and all lakes in Lovells Township as well.

Please refer to the township's zoning ordinances for a complete understanding of these rules and regulations. They are now available on line at www.lovellstownship.com under the "Contact Us" area, or a full copy may be purchased for $20.00 from the clerk at the township hall . And as always, please don't hesitate to contact the Zoning Administrator (Dale Gauthier, Jr.) or myself (Dave Lovell) if you have questions. I can be reached at home most evenings after 6pm: 348-3098 or on my cell 231 329-0061.

ANNUAL DINNER AND ANNUAL MEETING UPDATE by Connie Schrieber

Lee Bender, Rosemary and Mike Malbin, Paul Kott, Deb Anderson and Ed Bender

Annual Dinner

The annual dinner took place on Saturday, July 10th at Fuller's North Branch Outing Club.

Dinner was enjoyed by 46 Foundation supporters.

Jerry Rucker took a minute to welcome all of the guests and John Dallas informed everyone of the North Branch Foundation's fund raising drive.

Everyone enjoyed the evening.

Plan to join us next year!

Win and Mary Case and Marian and Bill Gregory

Foundation Supporters at the Annual Meeting

Annual Meeting

The Foundation's annual meeting took place on Saturday, September 4th.

The agenda included a presentation by Dave Lovell the Township Zoning Enforcement Office. Updates on the Road Stream Crossing Grant, Large Woody Debris above Lovells, the River Keepers Program and the fight against Purple Loosestrife were discussed.

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation Board of Directors

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

955 Morley Road • Grayling • MI 49738

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Mission Statement: To preserve, protect and enhance the natural endowments of the watershed of the North Branch of the Au Sable River for the benefit of wild fish and game and public enjoyment and appreciation.

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