



Huron Pines

Conserving the Forests, Lakes and Streams of Northeast Michigan

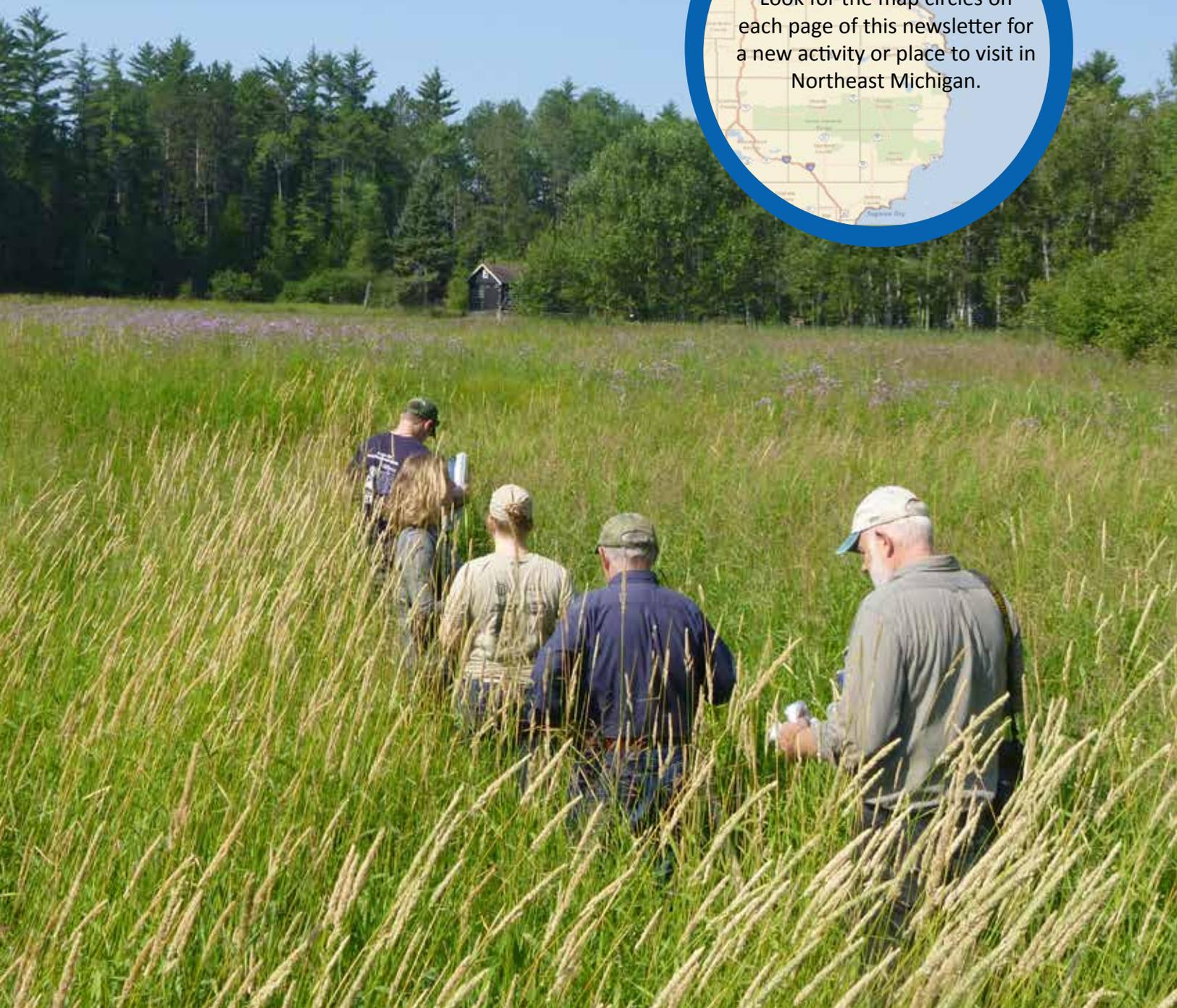
Newsletter

August 2014



On the Map in Northeast Michigan!

Look for the map circles on each page of this newsletter for a new activity or place to visit in Northeast Michigan.



Investing in the Great Outdoors

Huron Pines Business Supporters

Making the connection between the stewardship of nature and our region's economy, Huron Pines works in partnership with businesses that have an interest in Northeast Michigan. We use a science-based approach to land, water and wildlife protection and constantly think about how our programs can provide long-term benefits to the community. Collaboration with those in industry, tourism, energy, technology and other sectors is a way to find common ground and benefit the region as whole. Together, our work improves the quality of life in the region, something that we know is good for both business and the environment.



Join us today in conserving the forests, lakes, streams and communities of Northeast Michigan. Visit www.huronpines.org to learn more about what we do and our business member benefits or contact Development Services Coordinator Shelley Martinez at (989) 448-2293 ext. 15 or shelley@huronpines.org.

On the cover: Watershed Project Manager Sam Prentice leads a group of landowners and partners on a site visit in the Au Sable. This wetland property has some invasive species but is otherwise a thriving ecosystem.





Engaging Our Legislators

Showcasing Northeast Michigan

Earlier this summer, Huron Pines staff and partners spent some time showing our elected officials a few of Northeast Michigan's most unique habitats and species. We spent time talking with our lawmakers about the importance of Michigan's public lands, Kirtland's warbler conservation and Great Lakes Restoration. Their support for these projects is critical to the success of our projects and the well-being of natural resources in Northeast Michigan. 🌲



Staff and local partners discussed the importance of a state lands strategy and protecting the science-based management of our public lands with MI State Senator Darwin Boher.



U.S. Representative Dan Benishek (center) took a tour of conservation projects showing the positive impact of Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funding in Otsego County with Lisha Ramsdell (right) and Pigeon River Country State Forest Unit Manager Scott Whitcomb, MI DNR (left).



Kirtland's Warbler Alliance Directors Bill Rapai, Jerry Rucker and Chip Erwin pose for a photo outside the State Capitol building in Lansing before visiting legislators.



From left to right, Abigail Ertel, U.S. Senator Carl Levin, Scott Hicks (USFWS) and Dan Kennedy (MI DNR) discuss Kirtland's warbler conservation efforts.

State Representative Bruce Rendon participated in a discussion about jack pine management and the many opportunities the ecosystem offers beyond Kirtland's warbler habitat. Bruce was the first in the group to spot the warbler!



Lake Huron Coast



Phragmites Flyover Shows Our Success

In May, Invasive Species Coordinator Tim Engelhardt went flying with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources to get an aerial view of our Lake Huron coastline. Tim was able to see evidence of our success in fighting invasive phragmites—there is much less of the plant visible from the air compared to our initial survey in 2010, which aligns with the trend our Invasive Species SWAT Team has been seeing on the ground.

Tim states, “It was great to see the difference just a few short years of treatment has made on the shoreline, although we do still have work to do. We hope that if we do another aerial survey in 4 more years we’ll have a boring flight with no invasive phragmites to record!”

The Invasive Species SWAT Team is currently out ground-checking all of our 2013 treatment sites and making plans for this year’s projects. As in past years, they are seeing a lot of native plants growing in between the dead phragmites stalks—a good sign for a resilient future shoreline.

Learn more about our invasive species program at www.huronpines.org or contact Tim at (989) 448-2293 ext. 24 or tim@huronpines.org.



Up close: a few live phragmites stalks and some cattails are all that’s left in this dense stand of treated phragmites.

The above phragmites patch near Alpena was treated by our SWAT Team and dedicated volunteers in partnership with Lafarge North America. While Tim still saw dead stalks standing on his aerial survey, this year’s ground inventory shows very little live phragmites in that patch.

A Coastal Resource Receives More Help

In 2012, Huron Pines and the Alcona County Road Commission worked together to fix a major road problem and resource concern by putting in a timber bridge over the Black River in Alcona County. The river flows into Lake Huron and provides spawning habitat for several species of migratory fish as well as recreational opportunities for local communities. This year, Huron Pines and the road commission are again working together to improve the next three sites upstream of the 2012 work, reconnecting even more habitat and reducing pollution that affects the river all the way down to its mouth. Thanks to the Great Lakes Fishery Trust for making this work possible!



Explore Lake Huron’s Sunken Treasures on a Shipwreck Tour

Northeast Michigan’s Lake Huron shoreline boasts beautiful beaches and calm waters, but it is also known for some treacherous waters that have claimed ships for over one hundred years. On your next trip to Alpena, learn about the Great Lakes nautical history and see some of the interesting wrecks in the area on the glass-bottomed boat tour. Learn more at www.alpenashipwrecktours.com



Program Director Lisha Ramsdell showed Huron Pines staff how much sediment the Pigeon River cut through to reach its current bed. Behind her, the former impoundment is filling in quickly with soil-stabilizing plants.

Green Progress: Song of the Morning Dam

The first phase of the Song of the Morning project—the drawdown of the impoundment—began in late May, with the river cutting through years of sediment to find a new channel. On a recent staff trip to the site, we were impressed at the speed at which the newly exposed sediment was greening up with new growth. These new roots are helping to stabilize the sediment and prevent more of it from flowing downstream. So far, monitoring of the river shows that water quality standards are being met and the next phase of the project, dam removal, is planned to occur in 2015. Huron Pines will take over managing the removal of the dam structure early next year, and the Pigeon River will flow free for the first time in over 100 years. Check www.huronpines.org and follow us on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram for weekly progress updates.

Support This Project

Show your support for a reconnected Pigeon River by donating to the dam removal and restoration project at www.huronpines.org.

Invasive Species Blitz

On July 21-25, Huron Pines and the Department of Natural Resources staff at the Pigeon River Country State Forest (PRC) worked together on a complete invasive species inventory of the PRC. With the help of a few volunteers, teams floated the river and checked campsites, trails and other access points for invasive plants. These invaders, if left to grow, could block access to streams and trails and ruin the delicate forest ecosystem that brings so many visitors to the forest each year.

With an inventory complete, partners will prioritize sites and species and plan to control them in the future. Look for volunteer days on the schedule in 2015! 🌲

Explore Pigeon River Country: Join the Citizen Science Program

If you're looking for a way to help the Pigeon River Country State Forest while enjoying your favorite activities, check out the PRC Citizen Science Program. Led by our onsite Huron Pines AmeriCorps member, volunteers are helping to establish a base of data about wildlife. From migratory birds to amphibians, get out in the woods and help science at the same time!

Contact Kyle at BartowitzK@michigan.gov to learn more.

Small Town, Big on Water Quality



Big Developments in Rose City Stormwater

Rose City, while being one of the smaller communities along the Rifle River, has big plans for reducing the impacts of stormwater runoff from the city on the river. Through our Rifle River Watershed Restoration Project funded by the Environmental Protection Agency–Great Lakes Restoration Initiative and our Northern Saginaw Bay Restoration Initiative funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation–Sustain Our Great Lakes Program and numerous local contributors, we have been able to assist the city in planning and implementing some serious water quality improvement projects.



Reducing Runoff to the Rifle

In 2012, Huron Pines and volunteers protected the Rifle River in Rose City by adding a combination of practices that would reduce erosion and slow runoff into the river. The different practices showcase the many options for shoreline stabilization being used throughout the Rifle River Watershed. It will also make the shoreline safer for visitors who want to access the water. In 2014, the project is holding up well and is being complemented by the new rain gardens and stormwater treatment unit.



Waiting for a Rainy Day

In May, volunteers once again came to Rose City, this time to add more beauty to Rose City Park in the form of rain gardens that also capture and filter runoff before it gets to the river. The native plants in these gardens have deep roots that will absorb water and make them resistant to drought and other weather extremes.

For a more in-depth look at our Rifle River stormwater projects, take a look at our article published in the March/April issue of *Land and Water Magazine*, available online at www.huronpines.org or at www.landandwater.com.

Explore the Rifle Watershed: A Michigan Winery

If enjoying all your favorite water activities in Rose City or the nearby Rifle River Recreation Area has you thirsty for something more relaxing, pay a visit to the Rose Valley Winery to sample some of their locally grown reds, whites and exciting fruit wines. Check out their extensive list at www.rosevalleywinery.net.

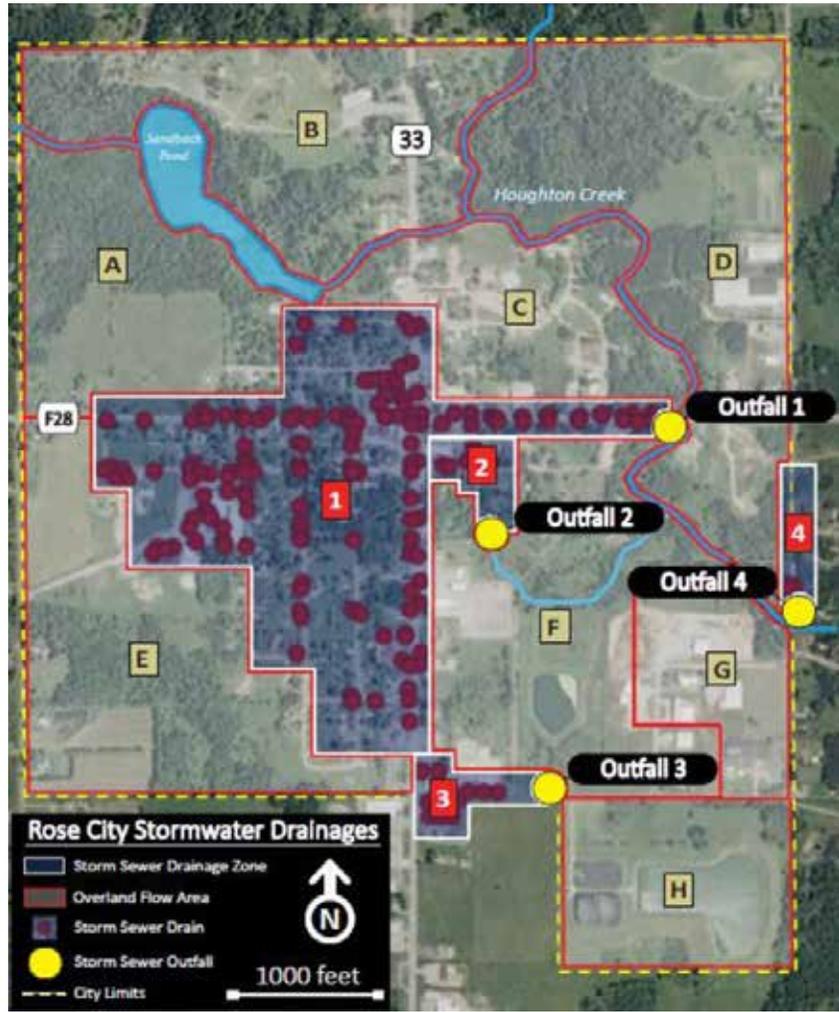




Northern Saginaw Bay

A Clean-Stormwater Town

The plans are ready and permits are in: the biggest stormwater treatment unit in Northeast Michigan is ready to be installed early this fall. Treating the stormwater that falls on 113 acres of land, this system of concrete chambers and pipes fits into the existing storm sewer system near the outfall into Houghton Creek, using the force of swirling water to push heavy sediments to a lower storage space and lighter oils to an upper area, where they will be cleaned out as part of the city's normal road maintenance schedule. 🌊



Stormwater Zone 1 covers nearly all of Rose City and drains to Outfall 1 on this map, which is where the stormwater treatment unit will be placed.

**Explore
Saginaw Bay:
Charity Island**

Looking for an island adventure this year? Visit Charity Island in Saginaw Bay and take a tour of the lightkeeper's home, explore the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wildlife sanctuary, see interesting geological formations or just enjoy the island quiet. Visit www.charityisland.net for more information.



Photo courtesy of the *Arenac Independent*.

Hearing Your Voice: Au Gres Community Meeting

Northern Saginaw Bay Restoration Initiative Project Manager Josh Leisen and Executive Director Brad Jensen organized a watershed town hall meeting for Arenac County on June 27 in Au Gres, where residents and local leaders came together to talk about local conservation issues affecting the Au Gres River Watershed and Lake Huron. The group discussed negative impacts like invasive species and beach closures, but also talked about the many positive steps that partners are taking to improve the quality of life for residents and visitors.

If you're interested in hosting a similar meeting in your community, contact us at (989) 448-2293.

Au Sable River Watershed



Grayling Hatchery Bypass Is A Go

Thanks to a diverse partnership involving state and federal agencies, local businesses, community partners and Huron Pines, migratory fish and other organisms will be able to move miles up the East Branch of the Au Sable River. With engineered plans ready for a log-terraced bypass channel, the funding is finally in place to move forward—and around—the hatchery later this year. This project is funded in part by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Michigan Department of Natural Resources Habitat Improvement Account.

Once the bypass is complete, our focus will turn to the next aquatic barrier upstream in the East Branch. The crossing at Karen Lake Road features four undersized culverts that will be replaced in 2015 as part of the Au Sable Watershed Restoration Project, with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Sustain Our Great Lakes Program, Camp Grayling (Michigan Department of Military and Veterans Affairs), Anglers of the Au Sable and donated labor from the Crawford County Road Commission. Together, these projects will reconnect over 30 miles of the Au Sable's East Branch for aquatic organism passage.



Once complete, the bypass channel for the East Branch Au Sable will look similar to this series of log steps (courtesy of Stantec).

Explore the

Au Sable: Iargo Springs

A Huron Pines staff favorite, Iargo Springs (part of the Huron-Manistee National Forest) is a great stop along the lower Au Sable River. Out of the river's steep banks flow springs of the fresh, cold water that makes the river such good habitat for blue-ribbon trout. Head west from Oscoda on the scenic River Road to get to this peaceful natural area.

Kirtland's Warbler Alliance

May, June and July were busy months for Kirtland's warblers and their fans in Northeast Michigan. While the warblers were nesting and raising families, humans were working to create a plan for sustained conservation of warbler habitat—the only way the species will be able to survive once taken off the Endangered Species List.

The Kirtland's Warbler Alliance, Huron Pines and partners reached out to legislators to express just how important this little bird is to Michigan's economy and ecology. Through visits to the State Capitol and to the jack pine, our leaders got a chance to see how interconnected the jack pine is with Northeast Michigan as a whole.

Another success in June was our first Kirtland's Warbler Home Opener. Celebrity master birder Greg Miller came to Grayling and talked about his life as a birder, his adventures chasing a Big Year (over 700 bird species seen in one year) and his experiences as a consultant on the book and movie that resulted. A great group assembled to share stories and raise funds for Kirtland's warbler efforts. You can become a supporter of Kirtland's warbler conservation at www.kirtlandswarbler.org.



Greg Miller at the Kirtland's Warbler Home Opener on June 12.



Our New Mantra: Clean, Drain, Dry!

The Invasive Species SWAT Team has boaters across Northeast Michigan repeating those three words to themselves when entering and leaving our lakes thanks to our mobile boat washing unit provided by the U.S. Forest Service. The team has taken the boat wash to lakes large and small throughout the region, helping to promote aquatic invasive species awareness to boaters at public launches.

In addition to helping visitors understand the importance of preventing invasive species from entering our water bodies, the boat wash is a great tool to promote to lake associations and other groups just how easy it is to take action.



Be A Part of Helping Nature!

Signing up for recurring giving makes it easier for donors to support Huron Pines and it helps our nonprofit foster sustainable conservation projects. And, it's secure and easy—in fact, going on the website and signing up to make a monthly gift takes on average less than two minutes of your time to set up!

You can sign up at www.huronpines.org/donate or contact Shelley Martinez, our Development Services Coordinator, at (989) 448-2293 ext. 15. When you join, you automatically become a member of Huron Pines and reap the benefits. And so does nature!



Lakefront Landowner Site Visits

Higgins Lake has always been a leader in encouraging landowners to become better stewards of their shorelines. This year, we've seen an increase in lake shoreline site visit requests, especially around our lakes. People are looking for help stopping erosion, controlling invasive species and making their shorelines beautiful at the same time. In addition to providing the mobile boat wash for outreach events at the lake, our staff has been visiting with landowners and township parks staff to talk about what they can do to strengthen their native shorelines.

If you're interested in learning more about shoreline greenbelts, forest issues or how to attract wildlife, contact Huron Pines at (989) 448-2293 ext. 21 to set up a visit to your property. 🌲

A landowner studies information about shoreline greenbelts and how they can help stop the erosion that occurs on his beach every year.



On the Trail of a New Museum in Montmorency County

Through funding from USDA Rural Development, Huron Pines will manage the completion of a feasibility study and business plan for the Michigan Trails Museum & Stewardship Center in the old school building in Atlanta, MI. The building, which has been privately purchased and secured, is geographically centered in the region and poised to become a stewardship hub linked by trails to other destinations in Northeast Michigan. This facility could fulfill a regional need for youth and adult education to help citizens understand the northern landscape, make use of its resources wisely and sustain vibrant communities in a healthier natural environment. Thanks to the Atlanta Area Tourism Council and Briley Township, there has already been much broad-based support and enthusiasm generated for this project.

Explore Stormy Fun for All Ages: Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary

If you've never experienced a bone-shaking thunderstorm on the Great Lakes, the Thunder Bay National Marine Sanctuary offers the chance to experience the waves and noise on their life-sized model of a shipping boat. While you're at the museum, take a look at the interesting artifacts recovered from Great Lakes shipwrecks and learn about the maritime history of our region. Visit <http://thunderbay.noaa.gov/> to learn more.

Road/Stream Crossing Projects Are Not a Wash

We received several reports from partners and the public about road washouts in Northeast Michigan this spring. This underlines the importance of improving undersized and failing culverts: in addition to water quality and habitat impacts, these structures cause safety and road infrastructure problems.

We are happy to report that sites we have improved in recent years held up well to the extreme spring flows. Head to www.huronpines.org and browse our watershed projects by name or location to see what we have planned in your area.

Ninety Percent Done and in the Final Stretch

The Thunder Bay Road/Stream Crossing Improvement Project is nearly complete after the ninth road/stream crossing of 10 was replaced in June. The culvert, located on Wildcat Creek at Hubbard Lake Trail in Alcona County, has been an issue for years—each spring, the culvert is unable to handle the high flows caused by spring runoff, resulting in road washout and excessive sediment in the creek.

The tenth crossing has been chosen and will be replaced later this year, completing the watershed-wide project to reconnect 140 miles of stream and prevent 50 tons of sediment from entering the watershed annually. 🌲



The new culvert, ready for installation at Wildcat Creek (courtesy of KPM Engineering).

Huron Pines Supporters

The Board and Staff of Huron Pines are thankful for the support of our members and project contributors. These contributors are directly responsible for making our work possible.

Major Funders

The Americana Foundation
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Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation
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DTE Energy Partners with Huron Pines for Conservation

In making Northeast Michigan a better place, DTE Energy Company and the DTE Energy Foundation have been behind the scenes in supporting a number of key land and water stewardship initiatives with Huron Pines. In the early days of our AmeriCorps program, they were the first corporation to jump on board with that innovative new program, helping us put many college graduates into conservation positions in Michigan and put them on the pathway to future employment in natural resources management.

DTE is a company that also helped launch our region-wide invasive species control effort, has sponsored our Kirtland's Warbler economic summit, and this year is making more of our river restoration projects possible.

On the right, Matt Shackelford from DTE Energy looks at a road/stream crossing site in the Rifle River Watershed that is blocking the movement of fish. With DTE Energy Foundation's support of river restoration programs at Huron Pines, this will be one of more than two dozen sites improved during the next two years. This work results in better fishing and canoeing opportunities, helps improve public access, and restores natural stream flows, thereby reducing flooding.



DTE Energy

