

Huron Pines

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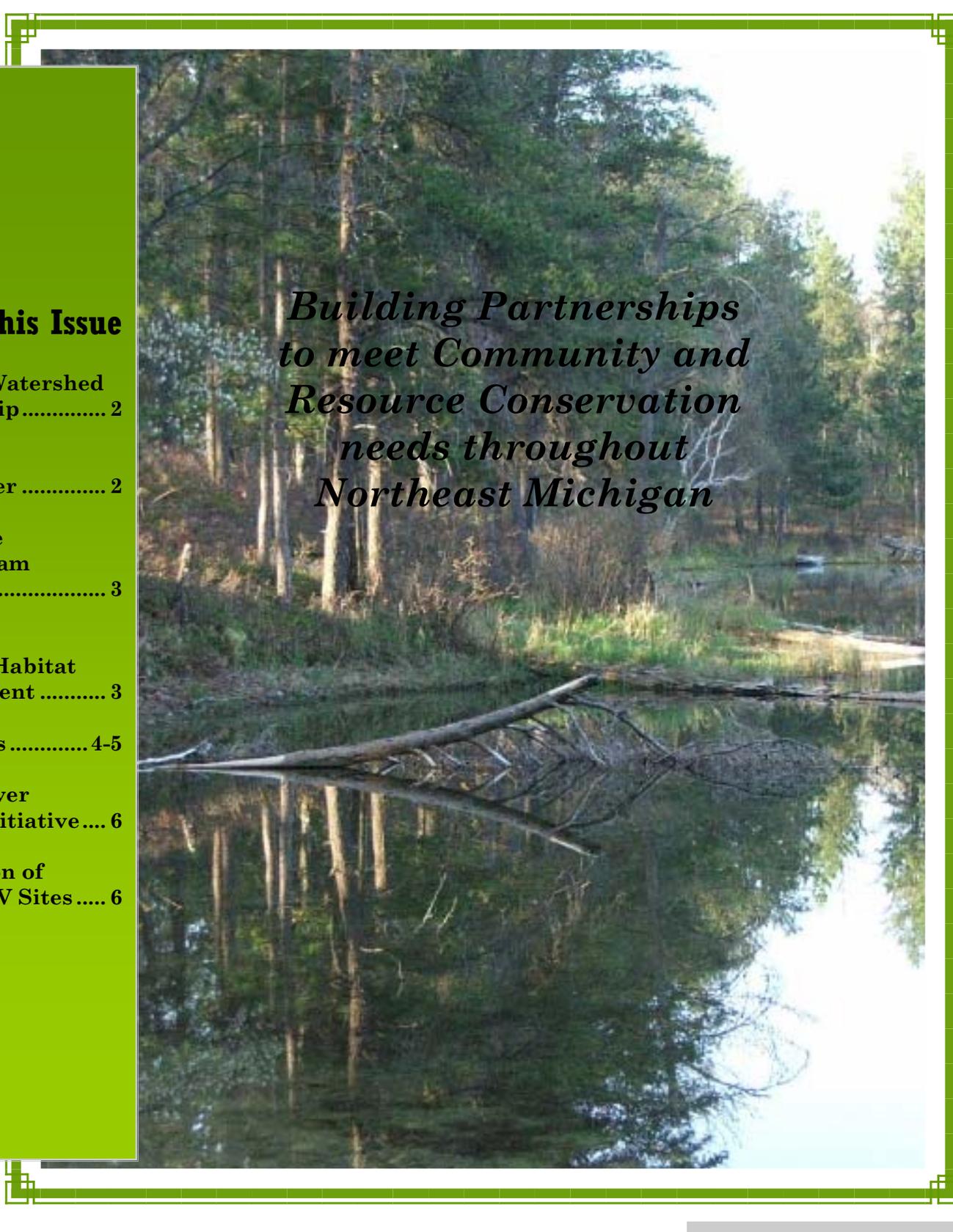
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*Building Partnerships
to meet Community and
Resource Conservation
needs throughout
Northeast Michigan*

Featured Watershed Projects

Ocqueoc River Watershed: Building Partnerships to Meet Resource Needs

Numerous partners have worked with Huron Pines this past year to preserve the unique resources of the Ocqueoc River Watershed, including the Ocqueoc River Commission, Northeast Michigan Council of Governments, Presque Isle District Library, Northeast Michigan Community Services Agency, HeadWaters Land Conservancy, Presque Isle Road Commission, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality. As a result of this partnering effort and with EPA funding from a Section 319 grant provided through MDEQ, the following projects have been completed:

- ◆ Two educational kiosks were built displaying natural resource information. The kiosks are located in the district libraries in Onaway and Rogers City.
- ◆ Ocqueoc River Appreciation Day held for watershed residents with hands-on demonstrations and discussions with natural resource professionals on stream ecology, groundwater stewardship, and sea lamprey control.
- ◆ Ocqueoc River Clean-up conducted, involving over 50 volunteers from local schools and Kiwanis Club.
- ◆ NEMCOG hosted two land use planning roundtable sessions targeted to local decision makers.
- ◆ Riparian Stewardship Workshop held at the Outdoor Education Center. Attendees learned things they can do to protect river water quality, with emphasis on native greenbelt planting and erosion control. Numerous resource materials were provided and the participants planted a native greenbelt at Ocqueoc Lake.
- ◆ Plans completed and construction starting soon on the Little Ocqueoc River/Silver Creek Road crossing to replace two perched culverts with a single bottomless culvert to improve fish passage and reduce downstream erosion.



Nicole Kovar and Kris Bruestle identify aquatic insects collected from the Ocqueoc River Watershed.

“Metropolitan” Areas in Ogemaw County Are Focus of Effort to Reduce Polluted Runoff

Local leaders interested in solving pollution problems associated with stormwater runoff in and around the City of West Branch have helped develop a new project this past year. Huron Pines RC&D is sponsoring this project, but, as always, is using the partnership approach to ensure success. Partners include a representative from the City of West Branch, Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, Ogemaw Conservation District, Rifle River Watershed Restoration Committee, MSU Extension, Ogemaw County Master Plan Committee, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Phase I of the project includes the following tasks:

- ◆ Implementation of an education campaign coordinated through the Ogemaw Conservation District
- ◆ Completion of an engineering study by Capital Consultants to estimate pollutant loading, recommend stormwater Best Management Practices and develop cost estimates
- ◆ Presentation of a final summary report to all affected local units of government

Completion of Phase I will allow project partners to move into Phase II- *implementing* Best Management Practices in priority areas to help reduce pollution entering the Rifle River.

Funding for Phase I of the project has been provided by a \$15,000 grant from the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN). Additional funding for Phase I has been provided by the Rifle River Watershed Restoration Committee (\$5,000), the Paul H. Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited (\$5,000), the William B. Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited (\$1,000) and Green Tree Services/Philbrick Developments (\$800).

Pine Drive Road-Stream Crossing

Initiated by the Roscommon County Road Commission, multiple partners came together in an effort to improve conditions at the crossing of Pine Drive and the South Branch of the Au Sable River. The old structure (two metal culverts) was undersized and deteriorating at a rapid pace. Sections of the road surface began to collapse, depositing yards of sediment into the river. The crossing was also acting as a dam, impounding the river and causing water temperatures to rise. Warm water fish species, before uncommon to the cold waters of the South Branch, were now populous upstream of the crossing.

Project partners discussed the possible Best Management Practices and decided that a 19'10" bottomless culvert was the best alternative. The bottomless culvert would allow for better base flow and fish passage and would also lead to a decrease in water temperature upstream and downstream of the crossing.

In August 2005, the Road Commission successfully replaced the crossing in an ecologically sensitive manner, thanks to their interest in a resource conservation partnership.

Roscommon County Road Commission
Huron Pines RC&D
Paul H. Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited
Michigan Fly Fishing Club
Au Sable River Watershed Restoration Committee
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Michigan Department of Natural Resources
Summit Petroleum



Before



After

Au Sable Instream Habitat Improvement

Lower Au Sable River– Huron Pines partnered with the US Forest Service and MDNR to place whole trees into the Au Sable River below Alcona and Mio dams. A construction helicopter was used to place just over 400 trees into the river to improve fish habitat and stream diversification.



Upper Au Sable River– Two river crews were hard at work this summer creating instream habitat structures on the Main Branch of the Au Sable River. The crews managed to place around 600 whole trees into the river, creating over 75 habitat structures. In addition to the river crew, a heavy lift construction helicopter was used for two days in September to fly more than 400 trees into the Main Branch just east of Grayling, creating over 50 habitat structures.

This was the first year of habitat work on the Main Branch after three successful years of work on the North Branch of the Au Sable. Seventy-five percent of the funding for this project comes through the Sport Fish Restoration Act and the State of Michigan matches with twenty-five percent. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has notified Huron Pines that funding for the next two years of the project will most likely be postponed. For more information about this project and the possible delay in funding contact Kris Bruestle at Huron Pines.

Volunteers...

Projects at Huron Pines would not be possible without the dedication of local volunteers and conservation and service organizations. Those listed below are just a few of the volunteers that have ensured the resource protection of Northeast Michigan by helping out with Huron Pines projects in recent months.

Underwater Volunteers

Volunteers work in all different environments, and at Higgins Lake, volunteers work underwater. Thanks to the efforts of a very dedicated group of local scuba divers, several sites of Eurasian watermilfoil have been contained. In 2002 Huron Pines staff conducted a milfoil inventory of the lake, funded through the Higgins Lake Foundation. For smaller sites, one of the recommended treatments was the use of bottom barriers. These barriers, made of a non-woven geotextile fabric, keep light from reaching the milfoil, effectively smothering the plant. While this is not a technique appropriate for use in every lake, at selected locations in Higgins it has worked very well. The primary drawback is that this treatment is very labor intensive, meaning that volunteer help is the key to its success. Divers Greg Douglas, Laurie Smith Tudor, Cal Philips, Don Mick, Marv Bolton, Bob Blamer, Bill Blamer, and Glenn Artz have been great about installing the barriers and maintaining them throughout the year. In addition, the diver support and/or watercraft provided by Wayne Hall, Ken Dennings, Pat Springstead, Nelson Craig, Gary Lightfoot, and Rick Meeks has helped to make the program a success. Huron Pines is pleased to see this project work so well and we thank the group at Higgins Lake for being such a great inspiration.



Students Volunteer to Protect Water Quality

The drain marking project in Rogers City was completed with assistance from students of the Presque Isle Academy. Educator Bruce Marshall brought 12 students to Rogers City where they applied a decal *No Dumping: Drains to Lake* on many of the storm drains with direct discharge to Lake Huron. "I was very pleased with the work and dedication of the students. In one day, they marked over 300 drains in Rogers City," stated Lisha Ramsdell, Watershed Coordinator. The students also passed out door hangers reminding residents not to dump household chemicals, fertilizers, used oil, and other toxins into the drains. "Many people think that whatever goes into the drain is treated before it is released. That is not the

case. All that goes in the storm drain system ends up directly in Lake Huron," Ramsdell said. Thus, in order to improve the water quality near Rogers City, it is important to inform the public and prevent harmful pollutants from entering the drain system as much as possible.

The students were armed with plastic storm decals, adhesive, wire brushes, door hangers, and a map. They walked through the city, block by block, in groups of three. When they found a storm drain they cleaned the surface, applied adhesive to the decal, and fixed it to the drain. "Everyone was quite proud of their accomplishments. Protecting water quality and being a part of volunteer service gave the students a sense of importance in the community," commented Bruce Marshall.



...Show Their Dedication with Action

Sport Fishermen Donate Precious Weekend Time

The Paul H. Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited has been one of the most active volunteer groups in Northern Michigan. Every spring and fall 15-20 chapter members make the trip up to Grayling for a weekend of relaxation, fishing, and hard work. This TU Chapter works with Huron Pines to identify resource needs, oftentimes supplying both the financial assistance and volunteer labor to restore, protect, and enhance our rivers and streams. The Paul H. Young Chapter is also an excellent project partner supplying much needed matching dollars for fishery restoration projects.



Huron Pines would like to thank the Paul H. Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited for their dedication to cold water fisheries and their tireless work ethic.



Club Members Restore Damage

The Indian Mission Conservation Club was instrumental in completing the Coppler Creek Illegal ORV Restoration Project this summer. Club members, accompanied by a local church youth group, helped plant over 2,000 native plants, shrubs, and trees in an effort to restore the disturbed areas and prevent future soil erosion and sedimentation. The group also installed 10 erosion control structures along the hillside to prevent the formation of gullies. The volunteer effort was a critical component of this restoration project (more information on the restoration project is on page 6). We thank them for all their hard work!

Behind the Scenes Help Greatly Appreciated

A special thanks to Leah La Vanture for her hard work and enthusiasm as a volunteer at Huron Pines. She provided assistance to the technical staff this summer by helping with mailings, organizing the resource library, gathering workshop materials, and performing fundraising research.

After living in Colorado for four years where she was a youth program coordinator for a local recreation district, Leah is back in Michigan pursuing her Masters degree in elementary education with the hope of teaching English as a second language.



To learn more about volunteer opportunities and Huron Pines projects, call 989-348-9319 ext. 18 or Email brad@huronpines.org

Pigeon River Habitat Initiative

Through the efforts of partners like the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, Little Traverse Conservancy, the Otsego Wildlife Legacy Society, and HeadWaters Land Conservancy, a very important project for the future of the Pigeon River Country has been launched and is now well underway. The goal of the Pigeon River Habitat Initiative is to protect and improve the lands in and around the Pigeon River



Country. The Pigeon River Country represents the largest contiguous forestland in the Lower Peninsula; helping protect wildlife corridors and improving habitat in the buffer zone will help preserve hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching opportunities for years to come.

After developing the project and raising funds on their own, the Steering Committee approached Huron Pines about providing the staffing to implement the project. Dan Sikarskie has been hard at work as the Pigeon River Habitat Specialist, working directly with private landowners to develop forest stewardship plans, promote conservation easements, and improve habitat.

Financial support for this project is provided by The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Charlevoix County Community Foundation, Ruffed Grouse Society, Otsego Wildlife Legacy Society, Headwaters and Merston Chapters of Trout Unlimited, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and individual donors. The funding will help private landowners incorporate sound ecological practices into their land use decisions and protect the unique wild character of the area. For more information, contact Dan at 989/348-9319.

Restoration of Illegal ORV Sites

Two illegal Off Road Vehicle (ORV) sites were restored in 2005 with money from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) ORV Trail Program. Huron Pines staff works with MDNR field staff on identified **illegal** ORV sites that impact our water resources, developing restoration designs that will eliminate access to the disturbed area and restoring those areas. Boulders, guardrail, fencing, trees, stumps, and earthen berms are all used to keep ORV's out of the disturbed areas. *It is important to note that these are **illegal** use sites and that MDNR manages over 3,100 miles and 5 scramble areas for ORV use.*

2005 Site Work

- 20 acres protected from illegal ORV damage
- Access blocked to 2 illegal stream crossings
- Over 2,000 native plants, trees, and shrubs planted
- 64 pounds of native grass seed sown
- Over 3,000 linear feet of guardrail, boulders, & fencing

Once the access management structures are in place, the area is then restored. Heavy equipment is used to smooth rutted land, native seed and mulch are applied to prevent future erosion problems, and native plants, trees, and shrubs are installed to return the area to a more natural state.



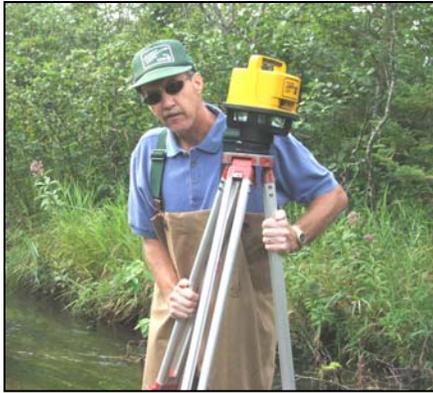
Before



After (Seed Not Yet)

Welcome to our new staff!

He just couldn't stay away. After enjoying nearly a full month of retirement from his job as Assistant State Conservationist with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Dan Sikarskie joined the staff at Huron Pines. Dan was not just housed in the same building with the RC&D for three years as Assistant State Conservationist, he was the NRCS RC&D



Coordinator for Huron Pines for sixteen years prior. He returned for an opportunity to spend his time working directly with private landowners, helping them to protect the Pigeon River Country. Dan's background and skills are helping Huron Pines to complete the Pigeon River Buffer Lands project, which runs

through June of 2006. In his new role as the Pigeon River Habitat Specialist, Dan is meeting with landowners to promote land stewardship options, implement on-the-ground habitat improvement projects, all while avoiding both computers and paperwork as much as he can.

Good Luck Nicole!

Nicole Kovar has been with Huron Pines for the past year serving as Watershed Planner for the Upper Manistee River. However, her job duties did not end there. Her assistance on numerous other projects, fishery knowledge, talent for graphic design, and homemade salsa will be greatly missed.

Nicole has taken a full-time position with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources as a Wildlife Lakes Specialist. She will be stationed in Willmar, Minnesota and will be responsible for creating fishery and waterfowl management plans for their prairie lakes.

We have enjoyed working with you the past year at Huron Pines, Nicole, and wish you well!



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All programs and services of RC&D are available without regard to race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status.

Huron Pines is pleased to announce that the new and improved website is up and running. Everyday more and more people are accessing the internet for information. In order to keep up with this increased demand Huron Pines contracted with Byte Productions to design a more user friendly website and one which the staff can easily keep up to date.

Project information can be accessed by county, watershed, or program area. There are links to our partners and we can now accept contributions online. In the near future we hope to establish an electronic newsletter for partners and enable them to share ideas with one another.

To keep up to date with ongoing projects, find out who we have been working with or make a contribution please visit the new webpage today.

What's the status of the Grayling Stormwater Project?

Check out this year's update available on DVD. This is a great educational tool for groups and communities. Please send \$15 to cover production and postage costs and we will send a Stormwater DVD out to you today.

For further information about our programs and services, please visit www.huronpines.org or call (989) 348-9319.



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