



LITTLE RIVER NEWS

SPRING/SUMMER 2016

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD JULY 9, 2016 AT 10 A.M. IN SKINNER PARK, IRONS, MICHIGAN. MARK YOUR CALENDAR. SAY HELLO TO YOUR NEIGHBORS. GET UP-TO-DATE INFO ABOUT OUR RIVER.

This year's annual meeting, **the Council's 20th!** will take place as usual at Skinner Park in Irons at 10 AM on July 9th. By now members should have received their allotment of raffle tickets. The prizes this year will be: 1st – a Jackson 11.5' Regal kayak, 2nd – a TFO fly rod with a matching reel and fly line, donated by D-Loop, 3rd – a full day guided fishing with John Gouker of D-Loop. Other goodies to be had in the various bucket raffles and auctions: Four wildlife photographs by David Spruance mounted in frames hand-crafted by Mike Furman, other large format photographs by David, gift certificates from Wolverine Worldwide, a matted and framed antique photograph printed from an original glass plate. We welcome any and all donations to the raffles. T-shirts, magnets, stickers, signs all with the LMWCC logo will be on sale. Volunteers will be needed to help at the meeting. We will be taking orders from members for free black willow seedlings, available for planting in the fall.

Speakers will be Kayla Knoll of the Manistee Conservation District and Shawn Kanouse. Shawn is the principle contractor employed by the board to complete some of the more technical and difficult rehabilitation and remediation projects undertaken on the river. Their presentations should make for an interesting discussion. Following the meeting, lunch will be served courtesy of the members of the Indian Club.

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YOUR TRUSTEES

Tim Phillips	President
Jim Squier	Vice president
Evelyn Furman	Recording secretary
Dan Sernick	Treasurer
Dale Downes	Membership
Joyce Durdell	Water Quality
Armas Soorus	Marketing
David Spruance	Newsletter
Joe Rogers	SWAT Team
John Miller	Corporate Member- ships
John Gorys	Emeritus
Kaye McDonald	Emeritus
Gordon Lewis	Emeritus

**LMWCC MISSION
STATEMENT**

Is to bring together persons and organizations who have an interest in the resource conservation and restoration of the Little Manistee River and its watershed. Our goals are to restore, protect, and preserve the natural character of the watershed by communicating resource problems and then offering and implementing problem resolution. We are a state chartered non-profit, tax-exempt organization. All contributions are tax deductible under §501{3} of the IRS code. Our business is conducted by a council of trustees elected by the membership. All positions are voluntary, non-compensated.

OTHER COMMITTEE**CHAIRS**

Anna Jo Rogers Web Master

The board is looking for a volunteer with grant request writing experience to help in our fund-raising efforts

Check out our new-look, up-dated, and informative web site: www.lmwcc.org. Many thanks to our wonderful web master, Anna Jo Rogers for her efforts on our behalf.

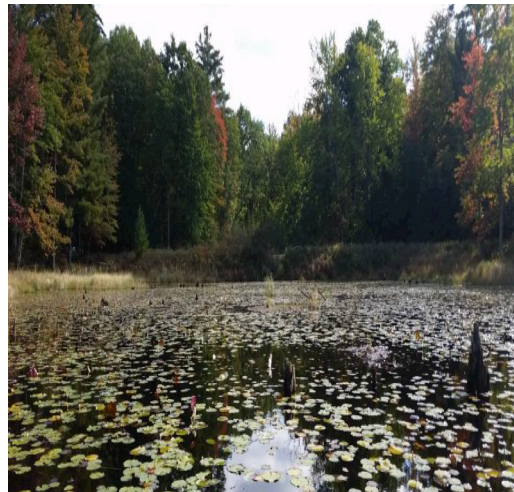
Hope to see everyone at Skinner Park in Irons on July 9 at 10 AM for what should be an informative members' meeting with speakers Kayla Knoll of MCD and Shawn Kanouse. The meeting will be followed by a raffle drawing, silent auction, and bucket raffle. Lunch will be provided courtesy of members of the Indian Club.

LMWCC GOALS FOR 2016 ADOPTED BY THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES**ANNUAL EVENTS**

- **Bug Survey**
- **Water Quality Survey**
- **Private Projects** — Continue to monitor and assist owners with the permitting process.
- **Membership** — Pursue the mass mailings to riparian owners begun last year.
- **Annual Meeting** —
Secure permits, print raffle tickets
Procure raffle prizes and solicit donations for the auction.
- **Salmon-in-the-classroom** —
LMWCC continues to support the program in the KND school district.
- **Newsletter** — published twice a year; mailed to members and posted on the LMWCC web site.
- **SWAT** — the team will clear the river periodically or as needed.
- **Fundraising** — Continue to explore fundraising options.
Sell LMWCC logo merchandise.
Identify organizations and groups as potential sources of support for on-going projects.
- **Web Site** — Make sure all significant and current information is available to members on the site
Provide links to other related organizations and partner groups
PayPal has now been implemented allowing members to renew on-line and make donations to the council.

2016 EVENTS

- The CRA channel restoration project above Nine Mile Bridge has now been completed and Michigan Trout Unlimited has done a fish sampling in the area of the site. This will serve as base-line data for future fish population studies in that area.
- Complete 3 habitat improvement projects in section #3 of the TU woody debris survey using funds gifted by the Jorgensen Family Foundation.
- The board has identified ten sites designated as “severe” in the CRA erosion survey conducted in 2014 to be remediated. Funds have been allocated to complete work at sites #10, 13, 16, 36, 37, 42, 56, 57, 60, 63. The full CRA survey can be seen at: www.lmwcc.com.
- Study the results of the TU woody debris and fish population survey of 2015 in an effort to target efforts for improving fish habitat and populations.
- Continue the recruitment of river-front property owners to join the organization.
- Continue the development of the EPA and MDEQ approved comprehensive watershed management plan.
- Initiate corporate memberships at an annual donation of \$100. Approved by the board at the Trustees’ meeting April 2, 2016.

OTHER NEWS FROM AROUND THE AREA**View across Syers Lake dam****View from Syers Lake towards the dam****LAKE MICHIGAN**

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) the water levels of Lake Michigan-Huron are nine inches higher than levels last year. Full Lake Michigan surface water temperatures are one degree warmer than last year — 42° as opposed to 41° in 2015.

While water levels typically rise in the spring and decline by roughly the same amount the following fall, that pattern has changed in recent years. The causes are a reduction in evaporation and increased precipitation from the El Nino weather pattern. Two very wet springs after two winters with heavier than normal snowfall have created a “storm trap over the Great Lakes.

In April water levels were recorded at 580 feet. The all-time high water level was 582.3 feet set in October of 1986,

and the record low was 576 feet recorded in January of 2013.

COUNCIL CALENDAR

May 21st	Macro invertebrate Survey
July 9th	Annual Meeting 10AM Skinner Park, Irons Lunch to follow the Meeting
July 11th	Water Quality Survey

To volunteer for either survey or future projects contact trustee Joyce Durdell. Volunteers are also needed to set-up Friday July 8 at 6PM for the annual meeting on the 9th and to help at the meeting on Saturday.

**Results of DNR Shocking Program and Fish Population Estimates at
Johnson's Bridge 1979 — 2015**

Year	#acre	Brown lbs/acre	#acre	Rainbow lbs/acre	#acre	Chinook lbs/acre	#acre	Coho lbs/acre	#acre	Brook lbs/acre
1979	348	51.26	211	5.46						
1981	364	83.10	390	18.26						
1995*	392	106.58	439	35.66						
2002	689	135.58	1354	18.36	1271	4.93				
2003	556	98.61	1965	18.18	328	1.83	10	0.23		
2004	628	88.16	768	16.59	13	0.09				
2008	508	92.56	1126	11.78	1866	6.52			1	0.07
2009	826	83.28	2382	16.82	625	3.79	28	0.67		
2010	988	95.79	1879	23.23	409	3.01	13	0.18		
2014	682	71.98	2690	18.33	2217	7.31	31	0.39		
2015	925	80.82	949	13.53	2069	11.54	5	0.08		

*Estimates include only fish 4" and larger.

Station length = 984 feet

1979-2004= .90 acres

2008-2010= .82 acres

2014=.87 acre

Given these numbers and the statement from Scott Heintzelman on the preceding page, it is not surprising that some time at the May Trustees' meeting was devoted to a discussion of possible actions the board might take in an effort to boost fish population numbers. One idea proposed was recommending to the DNR that all weir operations be halted for a two year period, but as the DNR is committed to bartering the eggs procured from the operation among the Great Lakes States and Provinces, and a minimum number of eggs is needed to maintain that program, such an idea is hardly likely to come to pass. It is sure that some time at the annual meeting on July 9 will be devoted to this situation.

ABOUT THE WEIR

The following is a statement from Scott Heintzelman, Central Lake Michigan Unit Manager of the Fisheries Division of the DNR in response to an email stream on April 28, 2016:

Hello Everyone,

We saw your discussion of the Little Manistee Weir operations this spring and we'd like to offer our perspective. As many of you are aware, the spring steelhead run on the Little Manistee River has been slow to develop and low in numbers. We installed the grates to stop fish in mid-March. To date we have been able to take eggs twice and have about 60% of state needs met. We were hopeful that today was going to be last day of egg take and the grates would be pulled before the weekend. After sampling fish for ripeness yesterday it was determined that only 37% percent of the fish in the facility were ripe. Based on the number of fish we have in the facility that would not be enough ripe fish to reach our quota so the decision was made to wait until next week. The weather this spring has not been very favorable for taking steelhead eggs and when it stays cold, the fish ripen up very slowly and prolong the process.

We don't believe there is anything wrong with the Little Manistee River itself. The numbers of young-of-year steelhead and yearling steelhead found during our summer trout surveys of the Little Manistee River have been stable for many years indicating natural reproduction continues to occur, and at sufficient rate to maintain the steelhead population (**see the attached survey page#6**). Regarding steelhead numbers reported during fall operations, these numbers only represent what was passed through the facility during the time of operation. In years past we would leave grates in much longer to capture the bulk of the chinook run and also to see the beginning of the fall run of steelhead. In recent years the grates have been lifted

as soon as the chinook egg take has ended, well before the majority of fall steelhead show up so that is at least part of the reason the fall numbers have been low.

We believe the Little Manistee River had a good fall steelhead run last year, but the fish didn't come until late November and December. We spoke with many anglers who told us that good numbers of steelhead were available in December before the river closed. We also believe steelhead ran during the periodic warm-ups that occurred during the winter and that contributed to low numbers at the facility this spring. Many of those fish likely spawned and left the system before the grates were in place and our low drop back numbers appear to support that theory. Last, the trends you see on the Little Manistee River are similar to what is occurring on most Michigan rivers in recent years. The steelhead population lake-wide is feeling the effects of limited prey species and a changing ecosystem, to a lesser degree than chinook but still very noticeable in spawning returns.

We certainly sympathize with anyone fishing upstream of the facility this season. No doubt the fish have been scarce and the prolonged egg take operation has not resulted in many fish passed. However, we hope you recognize the importance of the eggs taken at the Little Manistee Weir from a regional perspective. Remember that the Little Manistee Weir is the sole source of steelhead eggs for all of Michigan and several other states as well. The steelhead eggs collected at the Little Manistee Weir help create and support exceptional steelhead fisheries throughout the region. With that comes a considerable amount of understanding from our local community and at times a certain level of sacrifice when the weather doesn't cooperate and operations don't go as planned.

LMWCC AND AREA NEWS

SYERS CREEK DAM

In the last issue of *The Little River News* there appeared an article detailing the adverse effects of a privately owned berm damming drainage into Syers Creek and flooding a natural wetland behind it. LMWCC with the support of the owner is committed to seeing the removal of the dam and the restoration of natural flows into Syers Creek. Working with Nate Winkler of Conservation Resource Alliance, grant requests have been submitted to fund the \$21,000 initial design phase of the project. Thus far no funding has been secured. LMWCC is prepared to contribute up to \$5000 for the project pending completion and acceptance of proposals and the commitment of sufficient funding of the entire scope of the project.

see photos page 7

EROSION SITES

Using the Little Manistee Erosion Site Survey completed by CRA in 2015, the board has identified ten locations, described as severe, to be remediated during 2016. Methods to be used in each of these projects range from terracing and whole tree revetments to slash placement and staking. The board has approved expenditures up to \$21,000 to complete these projects.

THE WEIR

The National Forest Service and the National Fish and Wildlife Service, with support from Michigan Trout Unlimited have proposed the installation of underwater cameras for viewing anadro-

mous fish migration. LMWCC has been asked to contribute to the project, and the board is in the process of considering the request.

For information on spring operations at the weir. please see page #5.

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN — A BRIEF HISTORY

In November of 2014 the LMWCC trustees began exploring the benefits of developing a management plan that would meet the standards of both the MDEQ and the EPA. At the Annual Meeting of the LMWCC in July of 2015, members agreed to support the establishment of a comprehensive watershed management plan, and Trustees Armas Sourus and Joyce Durdal volunteered to head the efforts on behalf of the LMWCC.

At its August, 2015 meeting the board approved the creation of three funds at the Manistee County Community Foundation: the “Plan Fund” to develop in full the management plan, the “Implementation Fund” to implement and maintain the plan, and the “LMWCC Fund” to contain funds donated to the LMWCC to ensure its long term viability.

A steering committee was formed, and Public Sector Consultants was chosen as Consultants for the development of the plan, and subsequently the Alliance for Economic Success in Manistee was appointed to serve as the fiduciary representative of the LMWCC during the plan’s development.

MORE ON INVASIVE SPECIES IN MICHIGAN

In July of 2015, the MDNR began a grant program aimed at controlling and preventing invasive species in the state.

In addition to the discovery of the New Zealand mud snail in the Pere Marquette River evidence of didymo (*didymosphenia geminata*) commonly known as **rock snot** has been detected in the Saint Mary's river. Didymo can quickly cover streambeds, suffocating the macro invertebrates on which fresh water fish feed. It can also cause algae blooms that deplete the oxygen content of flowing water. The best prevention of the spread of rock snot is, as with mud snails, a thorough cleaning with a bleach-based solution. Having a product like Clorox Clean-up Cleaner to spray waders and boots upon exiting a stream (required by the state of Wisconsin) is a great idea.

Aquatic invasive species are not the only target of the DNR's efforts. There are many non-native pests that are adversely affecting our forests.

The **Hemlock Woolly Adelgid** are tiny insects that secrete a white wax-like substance as they suck sap from Hemlock shoots and branches leaving the trees vulnerable to other stress factors. There are over 100 million mature Hemlocks in Michigan forests.



The **Emerald Ash Borer** (*Agrilus planipennis*) has decimated ash tree populations across the country. The insect has a one year life cycle. The larvae feed in the cambium, soft tissue between bark and wood, eventually girdling branches and whole trees.



The **Asian Longhorned Beetle** (*Anoplophora glabripennis*) primarily attacks maple trees. There are more than **1 billion** maples in Michigan. Larva feed in tunnels in the wood of branches and trunks, and they also threaten other species of Michigan trees.



In the next issue we will look at Oak Wilt. If you are concerned about your tree populations contact a licensed forester. The board has been working with Josh Fields of the Michigan Forestry Assistance Program as have the Manistee and Mason-Lake Conservation Districts.

DNR POSTS WARNINGS OF NEW INVASIVE SPECIES

In late 2015, the MDNR posted the following message:

In 2015 the Michigan departments of Environmental Quality and Natural Resources confirmed the presence of the **invasive New Zealand mudsnail** in the Pere Marquette River near Baldwin, which is a popular destination for trout and salmon anglers.

New Zealand mudsnails are each only about 1/8 inch long and can be difficult to see. However, these snails can significantly change the aquatic habitats they live in by reaching extremely high densities. When that happens, they can out-compete native species that are important food sources for trout. They also have no nutritional value for trout species that may feed upon them, which can negatively affect the overall condition of the trout.

The threat of New Zealand mudsnail spreading to new waters is high because they are easily transported via recreational users, such as anglers, due to their ability to attach to fishing equipment, wading gear and other hard surfaces. Once attached, they can hitch a ride to a new river or lake and begin the invasive process again. Additionally, a single snail can reproduce once transported.

New Zealand mudsnails are very resilient and have been known to survive in damp environments for up to 26 days.

As the spring fishing season gears up, anglers are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to target steelhead on the

Pere Marquette and other popular Michigan rivers. It is important for anglers to clean, drain and dry their equipment to help prevent the spread of these invasive snails, as well as all types of aquatic invasive species.

Anglers are encouraged to clean boats and equipment (including waders) with hot water or a diluted bleach solution, and, when possible, allow the equipment to dry for at least five days before reusing.



For more on invasive species please see **Page 3.**