



# ***LITTLE RIVER NEWS***

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SPRING/SUMMER 2018

**THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE HELD JULY, 7<sup>th</sup>  
AT SKINNER PARK IN IRONS, MICHIGAN. THE MEETING  
WILL BEGIN AT 10 AM, REGISTRATION BEGINS AT 9 AM.  
GET THE LATEST INFORMATION ON THE WORKINGS OF  
YOUR COUNCIL AND SAY 'HELLO' TO YOUR NEIGHBORS.  
SEE YOU THERE.**

The Council's 22<sup>nd</sup> annual meeting will be held, as usual, the Saturday immediately following the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday; this year July 7<sup>th</sup>. This year's featured speaker will be Josh Fields, a forester with the Manistee Conservation District. He will talk about invasive species and indigenous alternatives for replacing dead ash trees and oaks suffering from Oak Wilt. There will be a raffle with prizes such as two camera mounted drones, two days of guided fishing and a night's lodging courtesy of D-Loop Outfitters, and a ski package from Crystal Mountain Resort of four full day lift tickets. Raffle tickets will be mailed, and all members are encouraged to participate in the drawing. If you choose not to buy your tickets, please return them to the Council in the provided envelope. Members are also asked to donate items for the 'Bucket Raffle,' and to bring those items to Skinner Park on Friday evening after 5:30. This will greatly help our volunteers in setting up the hall for Saturday's meeting.

The meeting will also be an opportunity to hear from the Council Trustees as they discuss their areas of responsibilities on the board. The consultants at Networks Northwest who are drafting the Watershed Management Plan will also talk about the processes involved in completing such a comprehensive document. Lunch will be provided by members of The Indian Club.

<b>INSIDE</b>	
<b>WMP UPDATE</b>	<b>Page #2</b>
<b>A DAY WITH D-LOOP OUTFITTERS</b>	<b>Page #3</b>
<b>ANNUAL WEIR DATA</b>	<b>Pages #4-5</b>
<b>REPORT FROM WATER- SHED SUMMIT</b>	<b>Page #7</b>

## A STATUS REPORT ON THE WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN

On April 18<sup>th</sup>, the consultants at Networks Northwest circulated among the Little Manistee Watershed Plan Steering Committee members and the trustees of the LMWCC a completed draft of the Plan. The seven chapters cover the impetus for the plan, an overview of the watershed — not just the Little Manistee River but its tributaries and the lakes that lie within its drainage system, the problems besetting the health of the river including non-point pollution, sedimentation and thermal stressors, the responsibilities and tasks necessary to maintain the natural character of the watershed, the means of monitoring the success of those on-going efforts. The draft plan concludes with a discussion of the necessity of developing a comprehensive program to educate landowners and communities within the watershed of the benefits of preserving the natural essence of the entire watershed. Ed Hoogterp and Scott Gest of Networks Northwest had a meeting with members of the Steering Committee and other involved stakeholders on April 19<sup>th</sup> to discuss changes and additions to the draft. Two public meetings, in May and June, are scheduled to present the Plan to the public for input.

The original planned duration of the entire project was twelve months with submittal of the final draft of the plan to the MDEQ nine months into the process, leaving three months for review by MDEQ and EPA and time for subsequent revisions. The process seems, as of this

writing, to be a bit ahead of schedule.

The final delivered product will be a Watershed Management Plan (WMP) approved under both the state Clean Michigan Initiative Bond Program, overseen by the MDEQ and the federal Clean Water Act Section 319 Program governed by the EPA.

The trustees began discussing the advantages of such a plan as early as 2014 meeting with Greg Goudy of the MDEQ, Rob Carson of the Manistee County Planning Commission, representatives of the Manistee County Community Foundation and The Alliance for Economic Success in Manistee. AES is acting as the fiduciary agent for the LMWCC in funding the underwriting of the Plan. In the fall of 2015, the Trustees of the LMWCC established three accounts with the Manistee County Community Foundation in anticipation of incurring costs associated with developing a WMP. A Steering Committee headed by Armas Soorus and Joyce Durdal, trustees of the LMWCC was created to oversee the selection of qualified consultants and the actual drafting of the Plan, but LMWCC is paying the full cost of its development, \$40,000.00, to be drawn by AES from the accounts held with MCCF, and LMWCC will maintain ownership of the Plan. It is yet to be determined what entity/entities will be responsible for the implementation of the various aspects of the Plan, but LMWCC will continue to be the primary force in the physical work of protecting and restoring the river and its watershed.

## A DAY WITH D-LOOP OUTFITTERS

For the past thirty years, with few exceptions — certainly for the birth of a child and maybe later the birth of a grandchild — three friends from the East Coast and I get together for an annual fishing trip. After a successful steelheading trip last year in Michigan, we decided on a repeat performance. Because **D-Loop Outfitters** has been so generous in their support of the LMWCC, it seemed only fitting to book a trip with them. When I was making the arrangements with Chelsea Pete, the shop manager, I told her I had not been inside the store since before Ray Schmidt had sold it. Her reply was that she was sure once I came back I would do so over and over again.

After a couple of slow fishing days on the Pere Marquette, we met our D-Loop guides, Dave Barkman, the owner, and Brent Borchardt. The morning was cold — well below twenty degrees, but the sun promised to shine at least intermittently during the day. On the drive to the river Dave and I traded stories about Ray, and he shared with me his philosophy on being an outfitter. “It’s all about relationships,” he told me. “I don’t just want to be your guide today; I want to be your friend. I want you to come back... often. Every time you think about fishing with a guide in Michigan I want you to think about booking a trip with us.”

We put in at Tippy Dam, my friend Toby and I with Dave, friends John and Dick with Brent. We drifted the upper three-mile stretch, missed some strikes, had some hook-ups, landed some smaller fish. All the while Dave was scanning the bottom for the tell-tale shadows of THE BIG fish, and talking about where the fish liked to lie, best

tactics during different parts of the year for catching big browns, and the challenges of salmon season. After jetting back up to the dam, we did the same drift with similar results. On the third pass, the temperature was warmer, and the action increased commensurately. We landed some steelhead including a beautiful, fresh hen and a fat brown.



*A fresh Manistee River hen*

We pulled into a back eddy for lunch with the other boat. While Dave and Brent set up their grills and started lunch, the four of us talked quietly basking in the warmth of the welcomed sun. As we ate — grilled steak and skewered shrimp — the conversation turned to the work of the LMWC, and as I thanked Dave for D-Loop’s backing, both he and Brent said it is an organization worthy of their support. We made a few more passes. John caught and landed a giant steelhead, and Dick landed the biggest walleye any of us had ever seen. On the way back up river Dave asked if I thought everyone had had a good day. I said just look at the smiles. He

continued on **Page #9**

**Little Manistee River Weir Trout and Salmon  
Counted Spring and Fall from 1968 to 2017**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Spring Steelhead</b>	<b>Chinook</b>	<b>Coho</b>	<b>Fall Steelhead</b>	<b>Fall Brown Trout</b>
1968	1,640	11,230	60,248	1,322	28
1969	996	26,288	25,186	3,043	36
1970	1,405	34,190	108,400	7,411	123
1971	5,031	21,213	59,123	7,622	69
1972	7,403	24,994	2,314	3,561	5
1973	6,588	16,476	11,872	1,926	48
1974	3,684	24,156	6,129	3,488	161
1975	7,183	29,228	15,863	6,121	238
1976	1,874	16,159	24,505	578	106
1977	10,480	11,136	25,255	2,031	98
1978	7,240	20,230	23,696	320	51
1979	3,540	22,925	27,925	640	100
1980	4,505	15,761	50,004	1,111	28
1981	6,307	11,811	14,656	849	101
1982	4,100	14,358	18,458	347	62
1983	5,091	39,359	26,968	3,100	43
1984	7,950	32,632	33,982	1,909	141
1985	6,517	34,006	15,256	6,356	177
1986	7,036	22,131	16,724	4,720	99
1987	6,315	31,841	15,101	1,450	48
1988	8,432	12,519	4,467	1,050	27
1989	5,102	18,338	14,023	1,130	29
1990	4,411	19,499	10,030	1,521	55
1991	6,109	21,067	12,300	3,666	113
1992	4,597	15,866	13,441	3,054	104
1993	6,156	12,911	18,096	1,702	118
1994	4,411	11,886	562	2,849	126
1995	3,553	13,004	394	351	31
1996	9,057	17,090	2,572	5,249	174
1997	7,096	15,433	781	915	123
1998	4,005	7,170	1,463	888	28
1999	4,484	18,621	519	662	39
2000	4,239	13,029	600	319	74
2001	7,029	18,279	911	2,262	59

2002	6,290	19,385	538	120	38
2003	3,209	14,419	616	1,404	43
2004	2,571	15,618	1,102	1,074	60
2005	3,483	11,075	2,100	665	53
2006	2,949	12,772	238	417	56
2007	2,880	10,946	303	738	50
2008	3,441	5,169	172	406	58
2009	4,191	8,274	126	343	86
2010	1,961	5,776	203	91	32
2011	3,196	14,124	1,815	901	40
2012	4,818	12,327	1,333	283	103
2013	3,667	6,427	1,021	988	80
2014	2,767	2,781	760	392	79
2015	2,857	654	259	51	65
2016	1,834	1,379	528	310	44
2017	2,827	1,768	3,606	478	44

	<b>Spring Steelhead</b>	<b>Chinook</b>	<b>Coho</b>	<b>Fall Steelhead</b>	<b>Fall Brown Trout</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	236,504	817,730	676,544	92,193	3,793
<b>Average</b>	4,730	16,355	13,531	1,844	76

Every so often it is good to look at the entire history of the operations at the weir. As has been discussed at several recent annual meetings, some members feel there are fewer fish in the river, certainly fewer steelhead smolts than there were in years past. The above numbers represent the total numbers of fish that have been actually counted at the weir each year; they do not account for the numbers of fish that have passed upstream before the gates at the weir were put in place to meet the quota of necessary fish for the egg-taking operation.

As we know, in 2016 the number of spring steelhead necessary to meet the quota was not only very late in arriving but barely managed to achieve the minimum number. The gates were in place that year for a full five weeks while the DNR waited for the necessary number of fish to appear before beginning the egg-taking process. Certainly the numbers of spring steelhead counted at the weir have declined since the nineties and the first few years of this millennium, and in the last five years that number has been well below historic averages.

There also has been a steep decline in the numbers of salmon, both Chinook and Coho in comparison to historic averages. As DNR fisheries biologist, Mark Tonello, discussed at last year's annual meeting, that decline is the result of environmental conditions, namely the depletion of the forage class of fish, primarily alewives and smelt. This has led to heavy competition among the various species of predatory fish. **(See the article on the following page).**

## A Cleaner Lake Michigan is a Less Bountiful Lake Michigan

Years ago, when I first moved to Chicago, Lake Michigan's waters were an impenetrable murky brownish green, but those dark waters abounded with nutrients and green algae. While the lake may have been uninviting to swimmers and boaters, it supported a vigorous fishery filled with perch and smelt, trout and salmon.

Researchers at Michigan Tech Research Institute analyzed satellite images between 1998 and 2012 and found that Lake Michigan and Huron are now cleaner than Lake Superior. Limiting the amount of agricultural and sewage run-off into the lake has greatly impacted that, but invasive mussels, now numbering in the trillions have had an even greater effect. These species, by their sheer numbers, can filter the entire volume of the lake every four to six days. In addition to filtering the water, the mussels' feces drop to the lake bottom where sunlight, once unable to reach such depths, converts nutrients from the feces into a nuisance algae, *Cladophora*. That algae are highly desirable to Asian carp.

By filtering the water, the mussels have decimated the population of phytoplankton, a single-celled green alga at the bottom of the food chain. Historically the phytoplankton fed the zooplankton which were eaten by small foraging prey fish such as alewives, and their populations are now at all-time lows. The clear water compounds the problem by eliminating cloudy refuges for the smaller fish making them more vulnerable to larger predators. This is causing some state fisheries managers to cut back on the stocking of predators like the king salmon

(Chinook). Since the appearance of the invasive mussels there has been a sharp decline in almost all fish species in Lake Michigan. In the mid to late eighties at the height of the king salmon fishing over 10 million pounds of fish were harvested each year. In recent years that number has fallen to 3 million pounds.

The Great Lakes have seen the devastating effects of invasive species since the 1940 's when the sea lamprey first appeared. They ravaged the native populations of lake trout and whitefish, and without those predators numbers of the non-native alewives soared. This in turn led to the introduction, of Pacific salmon, the king and silver (Coho) which very quickly brought the numbers of alewives under control and created a wonderful sport-fishing industry. We can see from the charts on the preceding pages what has happened to that fishery.

If there is any good news in all of this, researchers are finding that lake trout and steelhead have begun transitioning from preying on alewives to feeding on the bottom-dwelling round goby, another invasive species, that feeds almost exclusively on the *Cladophora* algae. But it also means that the populations of the Pacific salmon will continue to decline, unless, as some researchers think possible, the lack of phytoplankton begins to adversely affect the numbers of zebra and quagga mussels. But while the total numbers of zebra and quagga mussels is declining (a 40% drop between 2010 and 2015, the total weight of the mussel biomass has risen.

## A REPORT FROM THE 23<sup>RD</sup> ANNUAL WATERSHED SUMMIT

by vice-president Jim Squier

The 23<sup>rd</sup> annual Watershed Summit was held in Gaylord on April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018. Representatives from northern Michigan watersheds got together to share information and listen to presentations from watershed professionals. This year the speakers were MDNR senior biologist, Tim Cwalinski (Approach to Aquatic Habitat Management), Conservation Resource Alliance biologist, Nate Winkler, (Using Redd Surveys), and Dr. Bryan Burroughs, Executive Director of Michigan Trout Unlimited, (Advocating and Public Engagement on Policy/Legislation Involving our Cold Water Resources),

Tim Cwalinski made many points during his presentation. Point number one was that the DNR is short-handed, and partnerships are critical to the mission of maintenance, monitoring, and restoration of our watersheds. Point number two was that data (fish populations, water temperatures, angler reports, observations from kayakers, fisherman, hikers) should be used to make decisions. Point number three was that increased license fees were used for DNR grants rather than replacing retiring employees. This is a cheaper policy because there are no salaries, benefits, and retirement costs to be paid. Volunteers are cheaper laborers.

Nate's talk covered his attempt to use redd counts to analyze adult fish presence, population growth, spawning distribution, and identification of suitable habitat.

Bryan of Michigan Trout Unlimited talked about how laws and decisions have a major impact on our work of protecting our cold water fisheries. Bryan lobbies legislators on a regular basis and had some very practical advice for all of us who love clean, cold water watersheds. Here is a list of suggestions that have an impact on your lawmakers:

- 1) Join a conservation group that reflects your values (they monitor relevant issues)
- 2) Call officers of the group you joined for information
- 3) Do in-district meetings with elected officials (local, state, national)
- 4) Don't be intimidated (they don't know everything either)
- 5) Personalized calls and e-mails are more heavily counted and much more important than form letters
- 6) Conservation groups - if you are contacted and told to call or e-mail they consider it their last resort and therefore crucial that you act immediately
- 7) **Watch out right now!** Turnover this year at the state level is very high. Between now and January many individuals will be pushing extreme agendas before they leave. Legislation that affects water quality, withdrawal, EPA rules, mining, opening all land to ORV's, ballast water changes, and the Clean Water Act, to mention a few extreme measures, have already been introduced. **It is a scary time for our precious natural resources! Stay on top of the situation and keep informed of current governmental actions and policies.**

## ***LMWCC NEWS AND AROUND THE GREAT LAKES***

### ***Asian Carp***

Last June an eight pound, 28-inch-long silver Asian carp was caught alive in the Calumet River in Illinois, nine miles from Lake Michigan. It was the second Asian carp found beyond the electric barriers placed in the Sanitary and Ship Canal near Romeoville, Illinois. In 2010 a bighead carp was discovered in Lake Calumet. Members of Congress from Great Lakes states have attempted to enact legislation to permanently separate Lake Michigan from waters flowing towards the Mississippi River. The city of Chicago has opposed those attempts.

The Army Corps of Engineers has been placed in charge of a multi-agency effort to monitor the effectiveness of the three electric barriers as well as to develop a permanent, long-range plan to prevent the incursion of the Asian carp into Lake Michigan. The roughly \$5 million dollar a year program is funded in large part by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. President Trump threatened to cease funding the GLRI, but it received a \$300 million allocation in the omnibus funding bill the president signed this spring. But the administration has blocked the public release of the initial study of the proposals gathered by the Army Corps of Engineers.

### ***Nestle***

The Michigan DEQ in April approved a plan for Nestle to increase the amount of water it draws from the state's aquifer from 250 gallons per minute to 400 gallons. In spite of considerable local opposition to the plan, the DEQ insisted that it had thoroughly reviewed the appli-

cation and all laws relevant to the permit's issuance.

Nestle pays nothing for the water extracted and a mere \$200 for the annual DEQ permit.

### ***Syers Lake Dam***

Conservation Resource Alliance of Traverse City has secured sufficient funding to begin removal of the earthen berm preventing natural communication between Syers Lake (a natural wetland) and Syers Creek. Application for a permit to de-water the lake has been made as well as an application for the construction of a replacement of the berm which would restore natural flows into the creek. LMWCC has committed \$10,000 to support the project.

### ***Aquatic Habitat Grant Program***

Last fall LMWCC applied for a \$40,000 grant from the DNR's AHGP to be used to harvest dead and dying ash trees and convert them to instream habitat structures. In April the Council was notified that its request had been denied. The smallest grant awarded was for \$118,000.

### ***One Fly Competition***

LMWCC is in discussion with **D-Loop Outfitters** of Wellston to initiate an annual one fly tournament to be held the first Friday in May on the Manistee River. The proceeds from all entry fees would go the Council. The event would be similar to the famous One Fly competition held each year in Jackson, Wyoming. Details will be published in the Fall/Winter newsletter.



### ***Responsible Stewardship***

As we near the completion of the **Watershed Management Plan**, none of us should be deceived into thinking that the document will solve all the problems that beset our river, nor should we assume that the threats to its pristine nature will automatically disappear. The final document will be just that — a document. It will have little value if the recommended protections of the resource are not implemented and enforced. Part of the plan will include a community outreach and education component designed to inform the public about best use practices. But we as members of the LMWCC have a responsibility to continue our leadership role in setting examples of accountable riparian ownership.

Listed below are just a few basic things that each of us can do to protect our river:

- 1) Police your property for trash. This seems so obvious. We don't want trash littering our property, but don't forget the river itself. The end of the summer boating season and after the spring melt are the best times to remove trash from the river's banks and bed.
- 2) Have your septic system inspected regularly and cleaned out when necessary. Leaking systems leach harmful bacteria into the watershed.
- 3) Maintain a natural, uncut riparian zone, the wider the better. Streamside vegetation left uncut sends roots deeper into the soil guarding against erosion and sedimentation of the riverbed. Check with your local conservation district and plant indigenous species with flowers that attract wildlife.

4) Do not fertilize your yard. Commercial fertilizers contain chemicals that are harmful to the water quality, the aquatic life, and spur the growth of unwanted algae and other plant life.

5) Maintain a shaded river corridor. Shade keeps water temperatures cool. Josh Shields, the speaker at the annual meeting, will have suggestions for native species appropriate for planting along the river's banks.

### ***D-Loop continued from page #3***



*My friend John with a BIG buck* then asked if I wanted to book for next year. I was somewhat hesitant to commit so far in advance, but as I have been pretty much in charge of making fishing arrangements for the group, I agreed. As I was taking off my waders back in the shop, Dave already had his calendar opened to April 2019. We booked Dave and Brent for four days. I also booked a couple of days in May to fish with Dave. It was a day that proved both Chelsea and Dave Barkman correct in their predictions.

***LMWCC GOALS FOR 2018 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.

**2018 EVENTS**

- Complete a final report on the CRA channel restoration project located above 9 Mile Bridge including results of an electro-shocking.
- Begin the process of removing the Syers Creek dam.
- Continue the stream-bank remediation program based on the CRA bank erosion survey of 2015.
- Identify a stream section for another proposed channelization project.
- Study the results of the TU woody debris and fish population survey completed in 2015 in an effort to target areas for improving fish habitat and populations.
- Complete three fish habitat projects in section #3 of the TU woody debris survey using funds from a gift of the Jorgensen Family Foundation.
- 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.

Projected expenditures for implementing this year's goals are \$10,800. They do not include the commitment made by the board to fund the Watershed Management Plan. For that see page #2, "A Status Report on the WMP".

**YOUR TRUSTEES**

Tim Phillips	President
Jim Squier	Vice president
Dan Sernick	Treasurer
Dale Downes	Membership
Joyce Durdel	Water Surveys
Armas Soorus	WMP
David Spruance	Recording secretary/ Newsletter/ Grants
Joe Rogers	SWAT Team
Steve Bishop	
Greg Block	
Evelyn Furman	
John Gorys	Emeritus
Kaye McDonald	Emeritus
Gordon Lewis	Emeritus

**OTHER COMMITTEE  
CHAIRS**

Anna Jo Rogers      Web Master

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

**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(c)(3) of the IRS code. Our business is conducted by a council of trustees elected by the membership. All positions are voluntary, non-compensated.

**Now you can donate to LMWCC just by shopping at Amazon! Choose Little Manistee Watershed Council as your charitable organization at [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com) and a percentage of each purchase you make comes back to the Council to support our mission. It could not be easier to help protect and restore our river!**



*Little Manistee Watershed Conservation Council*

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