



# THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

**Fall/Winter 2014-2015**

## **Huron Pines Checks the Pulse of the Big Creek**

An update on the Au Sable Watershed Project

by **Sam Prentice, Huron Pines Project Mgr.**

Huron Pines is working with local and regional partners to address resource threats throughout the entire Au Sable River Watershed—from its headwaters all the way to Lake Huron's shore! Besides its sheer scale, this is a unique effort given its community-based focus and emphasis on partner participation in a project steering committee. Steering Committee members range from representatives of local organizations that are familiar with every bend of the river to regional resource partners that can speak to the importance of projects using a wider lens. Through its role on the steering committee, the North Branch Area Foundation recommended assessing the habitat quality of the West Branch of Big Creek due to concerns over excessive amounts of sand. Through the current funding opportunity, Huron Pines was able to spend a considerable amount of time this year conducting assessments to address resource concerns on the West Branch of Big Creek in a scientific and objective manner.

The first step of this process was to investigate existing habitat from the confluence of Spectacle Creek and the West Branch of Big Creek downstream to Townline Road. At nine survey locations, Huron Pines followed monitoring protocol developed by the Michigan DEQ to assess existing conditions and identify factors affecting the overall health of the creek. After gaining a better understanding of the quality of existing habitat, Huron Pines collected stream channel survey data at five locations by measuring river cross-sections, slope and sediment composition. Huron Pines recruited the help of Streamside Ecological Services, local volunteers and the Michigan DNR to conduct these measurements and install scour chains at five stations to measure sediment transport before and after large storm events. Meanwhile, surveys were also conducted at two locations to assess resident fish species and density. Community volunteers were encouraged to assist with the fish density surveys and experiential learning opportunities will continue as volunteers are taught how to measure river cross-sections and sediment quantities at each monitoring location. This local engagement contributes greatly to the sustainability of the project and offers an opportunity to measure changes to the aquatic system over time.



**West Branch of Big Creek**



**Undersized culvert on Pickerel Lake Road**

This objective study has already resulted in a better understanding of the pulse of the creek and where conservation action will be most beneficial. The stretch from County Road 612 down to Townline Road was identified as a priority area for the placement of woody material (generally, whole trees that are cabled into the river to provide multiple habitat benefits to fish and wildlife). Huron Pines began implementing the placement of woody material through a half-mile of privately-owned land in this priority stretch, and these efforts will continue next year to enhance at least 1.25 miles.

In addition to assessing the habitat quality of the West Branch of Big Creek, Huron Pines is also working to conserve resources in other ways within the North Branch system. These include the continual management of purple loosestrife and other priority invasive species, the replacement of a degrading road/stream crossing over the Middle Branch of Big Creek next year and road surface improvements at the West Branch of Big Creek/Townline Road Crossing.

This multifaceted, collaborative project is possible through funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation's Sustain Our Great Lake Program in 2013. This investment must be matched dollar-for-dollar through raising local funds, and the North Branch Area Foundation pledged \$30,000 over the course of three years to this watershed-wide conservation effort! You can learn more and pledge your personal support for this holistic effort by visiting [www.huronpines.org](http://www.huronpines.org) and searching "Au Sable."

## From the Presidents Desk

by Glen Eberly

Greetings ASNBAF members,

I'm Glen Eberly and I may be the first non-river property owner to become your President since the founding of this fine organization in 1943!

But, worry not. While our cabin is on Shupac Lake and we love the lake very much, my passion is the Au Sable North Branch. From my introduction to this fine cold water stream in 1972 I have grown to deeply appreciate this unique watershed for all its beauty and diversity of flora and fauna. That, of course, includes the wild brook and brown trout that are so important to many of us. The above said, I pledge my efforts to preserve, protect and enhance the qualities that make this part of northern Michigan so special to us all.

Let us thank outgoing President, Bill Ross, for his dedication and leadership over the past two years. Also, a big thanks to our outgoing board members, Dale Hernden and Chuck Wheeler, for their contributions over the past many years. Now, we welcome our new board members: Eric Bankhead (a longtime contributor and Boss River Keeper, who replaces Connie Schrieber on the board - Connie remains our Treasurer and takes on the role of a board Alternate) Mike Inman, Neil Wallace and Robert Weed. See their profiles in this newsletter. The watershed will benefit from their efforts.



Glen and Martha Eberly

2014 has been a challenging year. Our river seems to be under greater threat of negative impact than at any time since the last log drive about 115 years ago. The huge volume expansion of the Grayling Fish Hatchery, the leasing of state land for oil and gas exploitation, the potential expansion of Camp Grayling and potential damage to our watershed by water withdrawal from high volume hydraulic fracking (HVHF) all required your board attention this past year. These same threats continue into 2015.

On the "good news side," we have some great partners with common interests to protect this precious resource, the North Branch of the Au Sable River. Support of and from Anglers of the Au Sable, Trout Unlimited - State Council and the Mason Griffith and Headwaters TU Chapters and Huron Pines gives credibility and muscle to our causes. I will write more about our cooperative efforts with these partners in future newsletters.

Two major projects are ongoing to improve our river. They are the Big Creek Restoration Project and the Brook Trout Habitat Restoration Program on the North Branch. You will read more about these important projects in this newsletter. These along with the Purple Loosetrife War and the Morley Road Access Restoration will be our focused programs for 2015.

## Morley Road Access Restoration

by Glen Eberly

All of you who have been to the Morley Road Access Site this past year are aware that it is sorely in need of repair. There is erosion on either side of the toe log and the sod landing has holes that could cause injury.

A "site improvement plan" has been submitted to Michigan Department of Environmental Quality and while we anticipate approval within a month or so, the work will not be done until next spring, after the high water subsides. The plan calls for filling in the eroded spots with stone and gravel, providing a longer toe log, filling the holes in the landing, grading the landing and covering it with gravel. No increase in the access site size is planned but the improvements will be noticeable and durable. A volunteer work party will be formed next spring and we are fortunate to have Kenny Reed, of Huron Pines, volunteer to be our supervisor. Kenny has planned and participated in numerous such improvement projects on our beloved river. We will put out the call for volunteers in early spring 2015 to man this project.



Morley Road Access

We need additional permits from Lovells Township, Crawford County Road Commission and the DNR Natural Rivers Department, but all are expected to be forthcoming upon approval of our plan by the DEQ.

Our organization performed an access site restoration at Dam 4 in 2013 and we have received many favorable comments regarding that project. We expect to provide the same quality site improvement at Morley Road to enhance the enjoyment and safety of the many residents and visitors who access the North Branch at Morley Road.



## River Keeper Update

by Eric Bankhead, Network Lead

This years river maintenance took care of two log jams that were causing scouring of the river bottom along with being a potential hazard to kayak and canoe traffic. The log jams were removed by Northpoint Fisheries Management (Steve Sendek and crew). In addition a large willow tree that fell near Lovells Bridge was removed by Steve and his crew. Thanks to your support we can fund these instream maintenance issues and have them remediated in a timely manner.

One complaint was filed with Lovells Township this summer concerning a 'clear cut' just down stream from the confluence of Big Creek with the North Branch. The 'cutting' was about 20 feet wide and 75 feet from the dwelling's deck to the river bank. Brush as well as 20-25 trees were cleared. This is a violation of the 'Greenbelt Zoning' here in Lovells Township and also a violation that all river keepers are on the look out for as they float their stretch of the river. Action has been taken by the Township and we are looking forward to the replanting of new trees at the owners expense. You can check any Lovells Township Zoning Ordinance via the web at [www.lovellstownship.com](http://www.lovellstownship.com). Gary Neumann has an article in this newsletter on zoning which is also very educational.

Thanks to all who work on Purple Loosestrife again this summer, seems it will be a annual chore keeping it in check. Thanks also goes out to our faithful river keepers.



**Beavers** – there out there still, if you don't wrap your poplars or birches in fencing they'll do this to your favorite riverside trees. This poplar is about 18 inches in diameter and about 100-110 feet tall, 6 feet off the riverbank downstream of the Morley road access. If you can pinpoint any beaver activity call and we'll see if we can get some trapping done this season

### A Couple of River Pests!!



He seems to be quite happy with his work!!



### Purple Loosestrife

## Purple Loosestrife (PL) War - 2014

by Glen Eberly

Our property owners have really stepped up to battle this bad invasive species and we really appreciate all their hard work. The harsh winter seemed to have little negative effect on PL as it roared back strong on many stretches of our beloved North Branch this spring and summer.

Luckily we have a dedicated core of PL Warriors who volunteer to attack PL on their own time and provide their own materials. While some volunteers cover specific reaches of our North Branch, others are nomadic in their fight. Together, in 2014, they compiled an impressive 66 volunteer hours on the stream and removed or killed 1,242 plants. This was the highest plant count since we began the war in 2008!

Our volunteers this year were: Debi and Bill Anderson, Eric Bankhead and Connie Schrieber, John and Jane Dallas, Bill and Pat Duncanson, Glen and Martha Eberly, Bob Grant, Tony Kalbli, Gary Neumann, Bill and Janet Ross, George Shaw and Bonnie Marsh, Larry and Marge Warner, and Tom Wessel. When you see them around town or on the river, give them a big thank you for their good work! I apologize if I omitted anyone. If so, please let me know the hours you spent and the plants you destroyed. We are keeping track of this data as it counts as volunteer hours when applying for future grants for restoration work on our river.

Fortunately, we had no Wounded PL Warriors this year, so there will be no Purple Loosestrife Cross awarded at our annual dinner next summer. No doubt PL will have another meeting this winter to set up their sinister game plan for 2015, but take comfort in the fact that your PL Warriors will be ready for them again in the coming year.

## Meet a Couple of Our New Board Members.....



**Neil Wallace**—Almost six years ago I landed my favorite trout fishing accessory: a cabin on the North Branch, just above Red Dog.

My introduction to the North Branch was years before, when a young guide out of Gates recommended Sheep's Pasture to camp and fish. It was peaceful, beautiful, and had cooperative fish. I was hooked.

So I was honored to be invited to help out with the preservation and improvement efforts for our river. With my children grown I have the time and I hope my background will be useful. Down State in Clarkston I am a lawyer specializing in business, real estate and estate planning. In addition, I dabble in commercial real estate as an independent broker. In the past I have served as an elected Independence Township Trustee, Chairman of its Planning Commission and on a number of citizen and community organizations.

**Mike Inman**—Born in Detroit, MI in 1951 I spent HS years in Grand Rapids MI. and graduated from Western Michigan University and John Marshall Law School (Chicago). Lived in the City of Chicago for 15 years and since 1990 have resided in Lake Bluff, IL. with my wife Susan. We have two sons, Alex (26) and Joe (24). I am the founding partner of Inman and Fitzgibbons Ltd. We represent corporate clients involved in litigation.

Introduced to the North Branch area by my Grandpa Inman in the 1950's. He had a cabin just south of the Lovells Bridge. My wife and I have owned our place on the NB since 2003. I love all outdoor activities including splitting rounds for firewood, fishing, hunting and kayaking. Just watching the river flow by is a favorite!



We will meet Eric Bankhead and Robert Weed in the Spring/Summer newsletter.



## Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

955 Morley Road, Grayling, MI 49738

Here is my (our) contribution to support the Foundation:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution: \_\_\_\_\_

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

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

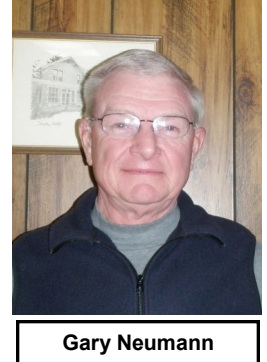
## A Review of the Green Belt District & the Natural Vegetation Strip Along Rivers, Creeks and Lakes in Lovells Township

By Gary Neumann, Lovells Township Supervisor & ASNBAF Board Member

This review was prompted by a recent violation of the Lovells Township Natural Vegetation Strip regulation. This violation is currently under investigation. All waterfront property owners in the township would benefit both their waterway and their stress level by reading and heeding the following.

In 1987 the MI DNR designated the Au Sable River and specific tributaries as a "natural river" per the Natural River Act of 1970 (P.A. 231 of 1970). This Act allows local governments to adopt waterfront protection measures as long as they are compatible with the MI DNR's requirements, and Lovells Township elected to adopt such measures. In addition to the North Branch of the Au Sable and its tributaries, Lovells Township included waterfront protection regulations around the Township's lakes. Consequently, via its Zoning Ordinance, Lovells Township is both the adoption and enforcement entity of the waterfront protection measures within the township.

Specifically, and verbatim from the Lovells Township Zoning Ordinance: **"The Green Belt District includes four hundred (400) feet on both sides of the East Branch of the Au Sable River, the North Branch of the Au Sable River, the West Branch of Big Creek, the Middle Branch of Big Creek, the East Branch of Big Creek, and around all lakes in Lovells Township."**



Gary Neumann

The above **Green Belt District** definition is vitally important to any property owner in Lovells Township who is within four hundred feet of a natural body of water because there are restrictions within the **Green Belt District** that are unique to this district. It behooves all such property owners to (1) realize and respect the fact that there are restrictions and (2) to understand that "I didn't know that it was illegal" is not an effective defense strategy from a legal perspective!

The intent of the **Natural Vegetation Strip** regulation within the Green Belt District is to minimize erosion, stabilize shorelines, protect water quality, keep nutrients from entering the water, maintain natural water temperatures, screen man made structures and to preserve the aesthetic values of the area.

Specifically, and verbatim from the Lovells Township Zoning Ordinance: **"Along the North Branch of the Au Sable River, the natural vegetation strip shall extend a minimum of seventy five (75) feet from the ordinary high water mark. On other streams and lakes in the district, the strip shall extend fifty (50) feet from the ordinary high water mark."**

Within the natural vegetation strip, trees and shrubs may be selectively pruned, or with Zoning Administrator approval (currently Dale Gauthier Jr. at 989-348-7301) be removed for harvest, to achieve a filtered view of the river or lake from the principal structure and for reasonable private access to the water. The Lovells Township Zoning Ordinance defines a **"Filtered View of River or Lake"** as: **"The maintenance or establishment of woody vegetation of sufficient density to screen developments from the river or lake, to provide for bank stabilization and erosion control, to serve as an aid to infiltration of surface runoff, and to provide cover to shade the water. The vegetation need not be so dense as to completely block the river or lake from view."**

The entire Lovells Zoning Ordinance is available on line at [www.lovellstownship.com](http://www.lovellstownship.com). In the SEARCH block enter "Zoning", and in the third block (titled "Zoning") you will have the option to download the Lovells Zoning Ordinance. Instructions on how to receive a paper copy of the Zoning Ordinance appears there as well.

## A 'Thank You' goes out to all of our supporter!

### Contributions received since the last newsletter:

Bill and Debbie Anderson  
Delton Baerwolf  
David and Cynthia Barnwell  
Ralph and Irene Burchi  
Susan Cooper  
Ray and Donna Dobleski  
Bill and Pat Duncanson  
Van Echler  
Gretchen Ferguson



Robert Geurin  
Thomas and Michaela Hector  
Mike and Sue Inman  
Jeff and Deb Jablonski  
Scott Johnson  
Steve Johnson  
Tony and Lora Kalbli  
Darby Kuenzel  
Daniel and Cheryl McCormick  
William Middleton  
Susan Miller and Nick Pane



Frank and Joan Nephew  
Gary Neumann  
Arnie and Aggie Ochs  
Bob and Betty Oelke  
Duane and Nancy Peterson  
John and Martha Pregler  
Bill and Janet Ross  
Vivek and Amy Sarin  
Garrett and Bonnie Walworth  
Robert and Susan Weed  
Chuck and Janice Wheeler





## Annual Meeting Update



Janet Ross, Martha Eberly  
and Marge Warner



The Annual Meeting was held on Saturday, August 30th. The board reported on the various activities that have taken place over the past year along with presenting the goals for the upcoming year.

The Treasurer reported that contributions for the year totaled \$17,995 and the current bank balance was \$16,328.

Four new directors were elected and Dale Herndon and Chuck Wheeler retired from the board.



Bill Ross, Larry Warner,  
Rose Dugdale and Glen Eberly



Eric Bankhead, Bill Duncanson, Tom  
Wessels, Connie Schrieber and Bob Grant

## Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

955 Morley Road • Grayling • MI 49738

### Officers—

Glen Eberly, President  
989-348-3085

Bob Grant, Vice President  
989-348-7574

Connie Schrieber, Treasurer  
989-348-6704

George Shaw, Secretary  
989-316-2224

Bill Ross, Past President  
989-348-7130

### Directors—

Debi Anderson	219-242-1900
Eric Bankhead	989-348-6704
John Dallas	989-348-6662
Bill Duncanson	989-348-9364
Mike Inman	989-348-2922
Steve Johnson	989-344-1053
Bob Marcereau	989-348-3987
Gary Neumann	989-348-9848
Jerry Rucker	989-348-8738
Jim Shiflett	517-930-0622
Neil Wallace	248-891-5446
Robert Weed	989-348-5793
Tom Wessels	231-271-6151

Happy Holidays!



**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.