



The River Guardian

Fall 2014

ARPOA Directors

David Smith, President; Mark Rohr, Vice President; Carol Vidrio, Treasurer; Judy Walle, Secretary; Barbara Bowers; Boyd Dillon; Joe Hemming, Rod Larkin; Pat Schmid; Greg Stansbury; and Gary Vetter.

From the President

Fellow Property Owners,

This year, summer on the river was kind of odd and the oddest thing was that the most summer-like weather was actually part of fall. What wasn't odd was all the great things that were happening in, on, or near the river.

The Association got their money's worth from the AmeriCorps Volunteer serving with the Au Sable River Watershed Committee. Kristy Preble went all out leading the efforts to protect the river from purple loosestrife (see AmeriCorps Service) and one of the best pl seasons we've had both with numbers of volunteers involved (19) and miles of river treated (24). I'm already looking forward to partnering with the Committee for a volunteer for 1015.

Howard Johnson led the Cedars for the Au Sable in distributing 50% more trees this year than last.

The Annual Meeting (and Wine and Cheese Gathering) held at Gates Au Sable Lodge (Thank you Josh and Katie) had the largest attendance ever... over 70 property owners met to hear about riparian issues and enjoy conversation with like minded people.

Our membership is growing slowly but surely. Over 30 owners have joined the Association in the last 3 months. Remember- you can help grow our membership too by recruiting your neighbors. Thanks in advance for your help with this.

As winter approaches, think on the bright side. The more snow we get, the more spring run-off there is and more water goes in the river. And more water is a good thing.

See you on the river,
David Smith

AmeriCorps Service

Kristina Preble

Since the middle of May, I have served as a Huron Pines AmeriCorps volunteer in partnership with the Au Sable River Property Owners Association (ARPOA) along with a few other groups. My service with ARPOA had a main direction - informing the community about and taking action against the pesky invasive species purple loosestrife. My real start in this direction began with attending four township board meetings - South Branch, Frederic, Lovells, and Big Creek. When my supervisor David Smith and I attended these meetings, we first spoke with the board members about purple loosestrife and second about our plan to hold information sessions to engage the community in the conversation as well.

After these meetings, I planned three information sessions about purple loosestrife. My presentation covered identification, habitat, methods of growth and dispersal, why it is so successful at out competing native plants, history, present state, treatment options, and most importantly what we're doing about it. After these presentations, it was the last point, what we're doing about it, that I focused on most.

Two purple loosestrife pulling events were scheduled for August 12th and 23rd. The first event was rained out unfortunately, but the second was a success. On a beautiful summer day, 17 volunteers canoed down two sections of the Au Sable below Grayling and over a dozen bags of purple loosestrife were collected. After an additional pull, one on one with the very dedicated volunteer Pat Schmid, we officially covered 15 miles of river.

In the middle of these purple loosestrife pulling events I had also scheduled a purple loosestrife inventory for August 18-21. Kathleen Clough, a middle-school science teacher and volunteer, and I set off from below Mio Dam

in kayaks with a GPS and data sheets in hand. For four days, we kayaked and camped down the river, marking a waypoint and noting the approximate number of plants in a patch each time we spotted some purple loosestrife. On the fourth day we reached Lake Huron and celebrated our accomplishment, but as we drove away we cringed every time purple loosestrife appeared in ditches alongside the road. The next step, transferring the data from paper copies into electronic ones, was comforting however. This data will make future action against the invasive species easier by knowing where to target control efforts. Completing all of these steps to treat such a vicious invasive species has been a privilege.

Through ARPOA, I was able to get involved in a community effort to improve the environment on the beautiful Au Sable River. I can't think of a better way to have spent five months and I thank you for your partnership and support.

Grayling Fish Hatchery

Joe Hemming, Board Member

As most of you are probably aware, the Grayling Fish Hatchery is in the process of substantially increasing its fish-raising capacity. This increase in fish production poses a grave threat to the Au Sable River.

By way of background, Harrietta Hills Trout Farm, LLC, owned by Dan Vogler, agreed as part of a lease agreement with Crawford County to operate the Hatchery while allowing it to be open to the public. The Hatchery was operated at a level of production below 20,000 pounds of fish annually, which meant that it did not require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit for water discharge from the hatchery into the river. Harrietta then applied for a permit in order to increase fish production at the hatchery. It was Harrietta's position that its current low level production was not cost effective in that the revenue generated from the required tourism operation at the hatchery was not adequate to offset expenses for Harrietta. As a result, Harrietta, in its application to the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality Water Bureau (DEQ), proposed applying for a two-stage permit that would allow it to operate the facility without any modifications up to a maximum annual production of 100,000 pounds of fish. Then it would pursue modifications to the hatchery that would allow Harrietta to produce up to 300,000 pounds of fish annually.

After input from various individuals and organizations, including Anglers of the Au Sable and Trout Unlimited, including its local chapter, Mason-Griffith Founders, a permit was issued by the DEQ on July 1, 2014 to allow this increase in fish production. The DEQ determined

that lowering the river's water quality due to the increased fish production was justified in order to support important social and economic development in the area by way of the hatchery and its increased fish production. This economic development, according to Harrietta, would include the creation of 1 to 2 full-time jobs with 2 additional seasonal jobs. The Sierra Club, together with Anglers of the Au Sable, did file petitions opposing the issuance of the permit as issued and requested a contested hearing. The Anglers of the Au Sable organization has a history of vigorously defending the Au Sable River system both in and out of court and protecting the river from various invasive and harmful activities. This includes the discharge of pollutants into the river, which will be the case with the hatchery.

Anglers has various concerns in regards to the permit including the amount of phosphorus that will be put into the river, waste management as well as concern for the financial backing and the need for a performance bond for the hatchery. The Anglers organization is not opposed to a hatchery on the East Branch of the Au Sable, but the hatchery must be operated properly with careful monitoring and proper safe guards. Any permit issued for the hatchery must be within the letter of the law so as to properly protect the Au Sable River system in the manner intended by the rules and regulations of the State of Michigan. The Anglers believes that the issuance of this permit is not in keeping with the state's rules and regulations. The proposed allowable limit of phosphorus to be discharged into the river is excessive. Anglers also objects to DEQ's apparent failure to address possible problems with nitrogen, organic carbon and dissolved oxygen. The water sampling requirements in the monitoring of the hatchery as required by the permit do not adequately protect the river, nor does the permit properly address injurious organisms that might result from hatchery operations including, and in particular, whirling disease. In addition, in the event of serious mishaps at the hatchery, the taxpayers could be left to foot the bill for a cleanup, in the absence of a performance bond. Anglers believes that the decision to allow degradation of our river was arbitrary and capricious. Furthermore, there was no analysis by the DEQ regarding the present social economic benefits the river presently provides and what the cost would be to the area by allowing hatchery operations to degrade the river. This permit, as issued, represents a serious and significant threat to the river.

Anglers looks forward to meeting with the DEQ to address its concerns with the permit and ultimately, if these concerns cannot be properly addressed, there will be a hearing on the permit before an administrative law judge.

What can you do as a property owner on the Au Sable River? Stay informed, keep a watchful eye on the river and its health and continue to support the Au Sable River Property Owner's Association, Anglers of the Au Sable and Trout Unlimited in their continuing and needed efforts to protect this precious river.

Our Members in the News

This article has also appeared in the North Woods Call, the Crawford County Avalanche, and the Voice of the Au Sable.

Marie Harrington, of Midland and Grayling, likes Northern White cedar trees but so do white tail deer. The deer like to eat the cedars and Harrington likes to plant them. Since 2007, wearing her signature Tilley hat, Harrington has helped plant over 500 cedar seedlings with planting crews from the Anglers of the Au Sable, Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited, the Sierra Club, and Huron Pines as well as for property owners unable to do their own planting. She has planted trees on the banks of the South Branch of the Au Sable River in the Mason Tract, on the Manistee River in the Deward Tract, and on the Au Sable River Mainstream. All of the planting projects have been carried out under the auspices of Cedars for the Au Sable, a program sponsored by the Au Sable River Property Owners Association and chaired by program founder Howard N. Johnson of Saginaw.



Cedars for the Au Sable started 20 years ago when Johnson noticed the lack of cedars along the riverbanks while he was fishing even though there were plenty of mature cedar trees. Putting two and two together, he determined that any naturally occurring cedar seedlings were being gobbled up by the unnaturally large deer populations along the river corridors. In order to have new cedars survive to eventually replace mature trees, the seedlings would have to be protected. As part of the project, tubes of fencing, or cages, are placed around each plant and fastened to two stakes. Another piece of fencing is put on top of each cage to prevent the deer from reaching over the top to eat the tree. After the trees have grown out of the original enclosure, that cage is replaced by a six-foot fence. When the cedar has grown out of the larger fence, it is big enough to withstand browsing by the deer and the cage can be removed. When instructing groups how to plant trees, Johnson notes "Many cedars are purchased and planted by property owners that will never see the trees grow

out of the cages. They are planting for their children and grandchildren."

Harrington does more than just plant the seedlings. She regularly joins crews that revisit planted trees to check on growth, weed inside the cages, install larger cages if necessary, and replant trees that for some reason haven't survived. She has also helped locate where trees should be planted. To make the actual planting more efficient, prior to planting, Harrington has helped cut the fencing into four foot pieces and often helps construct the cages after the material is cut. The assembled cages are then transported to the planting site to await the planting crews. On the second Saturday after Labor Day, Harrington can also be seen volunteering with other property owners to help distribute cedar kits (10 seedlings along with the cage material, weed guards, and stakes to protect them) to people who will then take the kits home to plant on their own property. This year, after the distribution was over, Harrington traveled to the river to plant 10 cedars and protect them with cages she constructed on site.

While floating the rivers or hiking the banks, Harrington is quick to point out caged trees and explain the project to her companions. She will check trees during stops and will often weed them to minimize competition on in the cage. Harrington says, "I have a lot of ownership for the trees I've planted and want to see them do well." She goes on to say, "I'm very proud to be a part of such a worthwhile effort."

Membership and Treasurer's Update

The key to our success in achieving our mission to protect, preserve and enhance the Au Sable River is the support of our members! We currently have 221 members, 32 of which are new to our organization. We are asking for your help in recruiting your friends and neighbors along the river to join the Au Sable River Property Owners Association so that we can continue our work.

Without strong membership, we cannot continue to work on projects such as erosion and pollution control and purple loosestrife removal. Our River Guardian program makes it possible for us to pinpoint problems along the river and take action in a timely manner, and the Cedars for the Au Sable has provided seedlings for purchase to residents along the river to plant and provide shade and cover for a healthy river.

Your membership dues and additional donations have been used to provide grants to the AmeriCorps program. The ARPOA has supported the Au Sable River Watershed Committee AmeriCorps volunteer for 5 years including 2015. This program has allowed us to utilize the

AmeriCorps volunteer to survey the Au Sable River for purple loosestrife and organize volunteer events for removal of such invasive species, planting of cedars along the river, and assisting in rebuilding of boat launch sites and other repair projects. The ARPOA has also provided a grant to the Huron Pines Save Our Great Lakes program which provides for the removal of dams, reduction of invasive species, sediment reduction, road stream crossings and other river projects.

We use your donations for our invasive projects, river patrol, river restoration and education outreach. We are always interested in hearing from our members as to how you would like us to utilize your donations. You may leave any questions or comment by e-mailing us at arpoa.mi@gmail.com or visit our website at www.arpoa-mi.org.

The River of Four Seasons

By Rod Larkin

Of all the rivers in our great state of Michigan, there is no river quite like our majestic AuSable River. As property owners on this magnificent river, we all know this to be true! I want to reflect for a few moments on our river of four seasons that we all have the joy and pleasure of experiencing throughout the entire year, and each season is special in and of its own.

Since it is fall, this is where we'll begin. Every fall season is special on our beloved river, but this year is definitely one for the memory books! Due to our unusually cool wet summer, the fall colors came on not only early, but with spectacular color and vividness—almost to the point of being as fluorescent as hunter's orange, red, yellow, and many colors in between. If you've been on the river this fall, you have certainly gazed in amazement! What's that sound? HUP? There they go, staying in shape for next year's race.

The geese have left for the winter. The ducks are banding together in larger groups and won't be far behind the geese, except for the few brave souls who choose to stick it out year round because they, like us, just can't leave this river behind. While it's still just mid-October, people and animals alike know what's just around the corner. Fall is my favorite season of the year, but on this river, wait a minute....

Winter is a splendor of beauty on this river! Ice formations of all kinds abound. Steam rises on the crisp, cold mornings to coat the bushes and pine boughs along the river's edge with a frosty glaze that is so beautiful, it can take your breath away—even before the -10 degree temp does when you first step outside in the morning! Pine trees draped in blankets of snow, with crystal clear water flowing below them that is reflecting the bluest of

blue skies—no canvas ever offered a more beautiful painting!

Wait! What's that I hear? HUP? Yep, there they go whizzing by, our local marathon racers taking advantage of the peace, beauty, and serenity of our majestic AuSable in the winter time. Practice makes perfect and there is no more perfect backdrop to practice in than the AuSable River in the winter time.

Just in the nick of time, the ice and snow is melting which means spring is being ushered in on our wonderful river. As much as we love winter on the AuSable, you can get too much of a good thing and we are more than ready for the glorious sights and sound of spring on our river! The white backdrop of winter gives way to budding green trees and bushes. All kinds of riverbank flowers are popping up and yes—the water iris are starting to bud. What's that I hear? Yes! The geese are back as are the ducks, all looking for that perfect nesting spot. And there it is again, that sound getting closer—HUP!

Ahh—summer is here and the river is alive and teaming with all kinds of activity! Fly fisherman abound waiting for the next strike that often doesn't come, but the tranquility of the river more than makes up for any lack of bite. On another day though, that fisherman thinks he landed in fly fishing heaven! The sleek and stealthy AuSable River boats parade by, another unique feature this river has that is found nowhere else on earth. Floating the river in some fashion, be it by boat, canoe, kayak, or tube—well it's just so doggone relaxing and beautiful, that you want to wake up and do it every day! What's that? HUP! HUP! HUP! YES—the race is on, and there is no other race on earth exactly like it—on our AuSable River. They should make a movie about this river. Oh yeah—they did... **The River.**

As an AuSable River Property Owner, isn't it great to have front row for one of the greatest shows on earth—the showing of the River of Four Seasons! I LOVE this river!

Why Not To Feed Deer This Winter

The following article has been adapted from a Michigan Department of Natural Resources posting. The original can be found at http://michigan.gov/documents/dnr/deer_and_feeding_ban_267230_7.pdf

Severe winters cause people to be concerned about the welfare of white-tailed deer and the deer's ability to survive the winter. White-tailed deer have biological adaptations that help them survive Michigan winters. Although winter-related starvation can occur during particularly hard winters, trying to save them by supplemental feeding is not the solution that many people think it is. Deer do not need handouts to survive winter.

Deer Adaptations to Survive Winter

In the fall, deer grow a specially designed winter coat and begin to store fat. The winter coat has hollow guard hairs for insulation with a fine hair underfur for warmth - this helps them retain body heat, thus reducing energy demands to stay warm. The fat reserve provides nutrition over winter. In addition, deer decrease their metabolic rate during the winter, which reduces food requirements to approximately one half of what they need in the summer. Research at the Cusino Wildlife Research Station in the Upper Peninsula (UP) showed that fawn growth rates even slowed to allow the deer to put on fat reserves for the winter. All these factors contribute to substantially decreased winter energy demands for a deer. Those demands can be met with limited natural browse, supplemented with the fat reserves.

In locations where a severe winter is an annual event, deer migrate to wintering habitat complexes, which are areas with thick overhead cover and natural winter browse available. These complexes provide thermal cover and sufficient natural food for deer to survive winter. They have been called "green barns" and the description is appropriate because they substantially reduce wind chill and the snow is often shallower under conifers. Deer substantially reduce their activity in these wintering complexes; reduced movement requires less energy.

All these adaptations: winter coat, fat storage, reduced metabolism, thermal cover, and sedentary behavior, help deer survive severe winters. Even with all the food they want, deer use their fat reserves and lose weight over winter. Deer in relatively good condition can fast for several weeks without harmful effects.

The Negatives of Feeding Deer Over Winter

Deer are ruminants, meaning they have a four part stomach with microbes that help digest woody vegetation. Deer acquire sufficient specifically adapted microbes over a period of time that digests specific food material. When deer eat food that has not been part of their diet, the specific microbes are not present to help with digestion. Deer will eat any readily available handout, forgoing the easily digestible natural food, thus possibly filling their stomach with indigestible material. If deer are provided a supplemental diet they cannot digest, the deer may starve even with a full stomach. Over the years, many deer have died with stomachs full of hay, for example, the hay having been provided as emergency food at a time when the animals had been feeding on browse for many weeks. In addition, a food source rich in carbohydrates has been known to cause acidosis (grain overload) and enterotoxemia (overeating

disease), which can be fatal. Corn, fed as an emergency supplemental diet, has been known to cause the death of many deer due to these difficulties. (See http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_12150_12220-26508--,00.html)

Other than commercially available pelletized food, there is not a single food source that provides the complete nutrition deer obtain through natural browse.

Providing artificial food may also increase the energy demand on deer. The deer may be forced to leave the wintering complex to gain access to the food or deer may be disturbed within the wintering complex when food is artificially distributed within the complex. Food placed for the convenience of humans causes deer to travel long distances through deep snow and away from thermo cover, thus resulting in a negative energy balance. Taking food into a wintering complex causes deer to move within the complex, forcing deer to unnecessarily utilize energy to avoid the intrusion.

Artificially feeding deer in the wrong location often results in deer spending winter in a poor location where wind chill is more severe and heat loss is more substantial. Deer in these locations become dependent upon artificial food to survive, as natural browse was never available. In addition, the winter thermal cover provided in a good winter complex not available, thus causing deer to expend excess energy on staying warm.

The artificial feeding of deer may also concentrate the animals into even a smaller area than the habitat that they usually winter in, which can cause two additional negatives consequences, the potential for disease transmission and habitat degradation. Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) have been documented in Michigan. Congregating deer repeatedly at feed sites increases the potential of disease transmission. Also, deer will eat everything within close proximity of the artificial feeding site. By the conclusion of winter, that site will be devoid of all edible vegetation; vegetation other wildlife species depend upon for survival.

Deer do not share food. Placing out an insufficient amount of food to feed all deer will not change what would happen without the food. If insufficient food is available to feed all deer, only the biggest and strongest deer will have access to the food. The young, old, weak, and smaller deer will be denied access. Insufficient food available to feed all deer only ensures the survival of those that would survive anyway. The survival of those deer without access to the food may actually be decreased. These deer expend valuable energy to try gaining access to food that dominant deer consume.