



The River Guardian

Winter 2013

ARPOA Directors

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

From the President

Fellow Property Owners,

As 2013 draws to a close and I look back at what the Association has done, I'm quite proud.

After lots of discussion, the board voted to start a website. It will be used for alerts and calls to action as well as news of what is going on in the watershed. There is also membership information to renew and help neighbors join ARPOA. Please visit www.arpoa-mi.org to keep up to date on ARPOA events.

For the 3rd year, we partnered with the Au Sable River Watershed Committee, Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of TU, and the Au Sable Big Water Preservation Association to fund an AmeriCorps volunteer hosted by the Watershed Committee. (See AmeriCorps article) This partnership has allowed projects to take place in the watershed that couldn't otherwise have happened.

One such project is ARPOA's ongoing battle to manage Purple Loosestrife in the watershed (See Purple Loosestrife article). This summer we hosted two PL events during which 24 volunteers spent a total of 136 hours working from Grayling to Stephan Landing and from McMaster's Bridge to just above Parmalee and removed over 18 large bags of roots, stems, and flowers. Despite getting hot and dirty, it was a lot of fun and it was important to maintain plant diversity.

At our October meeting, the ARPOA board voted to start a River Guardian program to more formally watch over what's happening on the river. See the River Guardians article for information and how you can sign-up to help.

Finally, Huron Pines received a grant from Save Our Great Lakes (See The AuSable River Watershed Wins Huge Grant Award) that with a required 1 to 1 match will complete projects costing over a million dollars in the

Au Sable watershed. As a partner with Huron Pines, ARPOA has a representative on the Steering Committee to help pick projects and will also commit matching funds. You'll hear more about this exciting opportunity in 2014.

I'm looking forward to 2014 and the possibilities the new year brings to preserve, protect, and enhance our wonderful riparian environment.

See you on the river,
David Smith

Meet Your New Board Members

Gary Vetter bought his family's home on the South Branch five years ago after having come up for many years to fly fish. He and his wife Barb, are looking forward to a permanent move. He has worked for many years in the finance business and they own several Little Caesars stores in Illinois.

He has three sons and three grandsons and enjoys seeing them develop a love for the outdoors.

Carol Vidrio has been visiting the Au Sable River area all of her life. In 1990, her husband Rick's family purchased a cabin on the Au Sable River. She was married at the Fisherman's Chapel in 1995. In 1999, she and her husband purchased their home and moved up here permanently in 2010. She is a member of and has done volunteer work with the Anglers of the Au Sable, Trout Unlimited, and Huron Pines over the past 15 years. She enjoys fishing, hunting, and trapping in the great outdoors with her husband and English Setter, Jackson.



Annual Meeting

There were 64 people in attendance at the 2nd Annual Wine & Cheese Meet & Greet Annual Meeting held at Gates Au Sable Lodge on July 20, 2013.

The meeting was called to order by David Smith, President. It was voted to dispense with the normal business of the meeting. Gary Vetter and Carol Vidrio were nominated as new board members. Greg Stansbury and Barb Bowers were nominated for another 3 year term. They were all elected unanimously.

The following are the officers for the 2013-2014 Board.
David Smith – President Joe Hemming – Treasurer
Mark Rohr – Vice President Judy Walle – Secretary
Carol Vidrio – Membership Chairman

David entertained a motion to adjourn the business meeting. It was moved by Dolf Greenberg and seconded by Karen Harrison. Motion passed.

Claire Wood was our AmeriCorps volunteer and she gave a brief explanation of what she was doing. She announced Volunteer Events to remove Purple Loosestrife on August 14th and 24th.

Howard Johnson gave an update and the history of the Cedars of the Au Sable. This program is in its 18th year. Since its inception 18,000 cedars have been sold and planted with a 50% survival rate.

Bob Andrus reported that the Mason-Griffith Founders TU Chapter is rebuilding structures in the river from town to Wakely Bridge and above town in the William's Tract. There are yellow ribbons on the structures that have been inventoried and will be rebuilt.

Greg Stansbury gave a report on the telemetry project that is tracking fish. And David Smith gave an update on the Purple Loosestrife project and brought plants for everyone to see to help everyone identify the plants in the wild.

The group then sampled wine, cheese, and conversation.

AmeriCorps

Starting in 2011 and continuing now into the fourth year (2014), the Au Sable River Property Owners Association has been a partner helping to fund a Huron Pines AmeriCorps volunteer hosted by the Au Sable River Watershed Committee. This program, partly funded by a grant to Huron Pines and the rest from the local host, is very similar to a domestic Peace Corps. The volunteer receives a living stipend during the time served and an educational grant (for tuition or loan payments) after the 900 hours have been completed.

The Watershed Committee has been very fortunate to have had 2 exemplary volunteers and expects the same in 2014. All ARPOA members who have had a chance to meet Lisa Tobin (2011 and 2012) and Clare Wood (2013) can agree with this assessment.

Joined also by Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Au Sable Big Water Preservation Association, this coalition has funded and supervised over 2700 direct hours of work on watershed projects by the volunteer. Past projects the volunteer has been involved with have included river mapping, invasive inventory and treatment including volunteer recruitment and organization, road stream crossing inventory, erosion inventory and treatment, road end repair, cedar planting, and publication of many of these events. We can look forward to another 900 quality hours in 2014.

River Guardians

GOOD NEWS!! Attention all of you Kayakers & Canoeists. Here is a great opportunity for you to cover new stretches of the river and participate in protecting this wonderful river that we all love. It's easy and fun! To become a River Guardian, all that it requires is that you paddle a designated stretch of the river twice a year (Spring & Fall) and report anything that seems irregular like trees that have fallen and block the river, any suspicious activities that you may observe, illegal or otherwise. We are only looking for eight hardy souls who will commit to paddle a stretch (8-10 miles and no more than 3 hours) and make a phone call or email to Mark Rohr (989-348-7748, mrohr@hendricksberkadia.com) after each trip, just to let us know that it has been done. If there is anything to report we will take it from there. Contact Mark to pick your designated stretch of the River, but hurry because they are going Fast!

Purple Loosestrife

In 2009, the ARPOA Board voted to begin a long-term project to manage Purple Loosestrife in the watershed. Purple Loosestrife is a very beautiful and very aggressive non-native plant from Eurasia that out-competes native

plants. Left unchecked it is very possible that we would have a monoculture (just one plant) in many stretches of the river.



That first year, an inventory was carried out from Grayling to McMaster's on the Mainstream. The next year the inventory was increased to include the Mainstream down to Parmalee and eradication began starting in town and moving downstream. In subsequent years, eradication efforts continued and the inventory included more and more stretches of the river. To date, the Mainstream has been inventoried from CR 612 to Lake Huron, the East Branch from Hartwick Pines to the confluence with the Mainstream, the South Branch from Lake St. Helen to the confluence with the Mainstream, and (in 2013) Big Creek near Luzerne from M72 to the Mainstream. Purple Loosestrife efforts on the North Branch are carried out by the North Branch Area Foundation and started in 2008.

The good news is that much of the river is free of Purple Loosestrife. Unfortunately, there are stretches that have very dense populations of the beautiful but evil plant. In those parts of the river with only single plants or small patches, mechanical methods of treatment are used—plants are dug out by hand, bagged and transported to the DNR Field Office for disposal. In the densely populated stretches, biological methods are used. *Galerucella pusilla* beetles are released with the expectation that they will increase in number to the point of having a devastating effect on the Purple Loosestrife. The beetles have been used successfully in the US for decades prior to which extensive research was carried out to ensure the beetles would eat only PL. The goal is to establish a beetle population that will follow the PL population and keep the invasive manageable. This will take time. In 2012 and 2013, beetles were released on the Mainstream near Breakfast Point and between the Whirlpool and Camp 10 below Parmalee as well as on the South Branch between Keno and Au Sable Rds. In several years positive results should be seen.

In the summer of 2014, watch the newsletter, the website, and the Crawford County Avalanche to learn about ways you can join with other ARPOA members to help manage this invasive plant.

The Au Sable River Watershed Wins Huge Grant Award

The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation announced grant awards through their Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program that for the past several years has improved the Great Lakes and the streams that feed into it. The SOGL grant for the Au Sable was applied for by Huron Pines who will administer the funds and manage the project. The \$1.2 million dollar project begins with the SOGL grant award of \$560,000. This amount is about half of the total project funding and will be used in 2014 and 2015 to reconnect at least 35 miles of stream for fish passage, replace at least 12 road/stream crossings thereby reducing erosion and improving fish passage, control invasive species thus restoring native habitat, control erosion at streambank sites, and enhance instream habitat at priority locations.

Huron Pines is working with additional partners to raise the rest of the needed support. The grant application was successful because of the commitment of matching funds from local partners. In addition to the County Road Commissions contributing their equipment and time, local river groups including the Au Sable River Property Owners Association pledge their support.

This program takes advantage of the efforts of many Au Sable groups and past projects and is a way to implement the Au Sable River Watershed Management Plan that was written in 2001, signed by most conservation and community groups active in the watershed, and approved by the State of Michigan's Department of Environmental Quality. The project goals also echo the recommendations made in the DNR Fish Division's Au Sable Management Plan.

The awarding of this grant to Huron Pines offers an incredible opportunity to impact the watershed at a level that wouldn't otherwise be possible. Groups and agencies—that perhaps have slight differences in priorities but share a common purpose to protect the Au Sable—will be brought together to form an effective partnership.

Membership Dues

It's not too late to pay your 2013-2014 dues, if you have not done so yet. Use the enclosed form and return envelope to renew your membership or to join.