

# Watershed

## R E P O R T E R

PARTNERING TO PROTECT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

FALL 2011

# A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

REBECCA FEDEWA  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Flint River and its watershed are many things to many different people.

To some, it's the watershed - a clearly outlined area on a map, for which we can cite certain statistics:

~We cover more than 1,358 square miles

~Our watershed encompasses portions of 7 counties

~Within our borders you will find 20 cities and villages and 58 townships.

To others, it's the Flint River itself. A waterway that is frequently mistaken as dangerous or polluted, but in reality is a thriving system filled with beauty and a wide variety of recreation and economic opportunities.

And to more, it is a smaller tributary—Swartz Creek, Kearsley Creek, Farmers Creek—where kids (and kids at heart) spend afternoons catching fish or frogs, but are often overlooked as an integral part of the Flint River system.

And for many, it is all of these things.

But most importantly, the Flint River and its tributaries are the defining characteristic of the communities that almost three quarters of a million people call home. Our river system is increasingly strong and healthy, and it can (and should!) play a key role in maintaining and restoring the vitality of all of our communities, whether you are in New Lothrop, Davison, Flint, Metamora, North Branch, or any of



*FRWC Executive Director Rebecca Fedewa examines a river rock for signs of living creatures*

the other 15 cities in our watershed.

It is our collective right to have clean and healthy waterways in our communities, but it will take all of us working together to ensure that the river continues to improve and prosper. If you are receiving this newsletter, you more than likely have taken that first, second or hundredth step to protect, preserve, and improve the Flint River and its watershed. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for all you do! I hope you continue with us as we turn the "voice of the Flint River" into a full-fledged chorus.

## EDITORIAL COMMENT JACK MINORE

It was Thomas Jefferson who stated that "The Price of Freedom is Eternal Vigilance." I suggest a current paraphrase: "Eternal Vigilance is the price of clean water!"

Candidates and office holders in both major political parties have repeatedly used the phrase, 'job-killing' in referring to various environmental regulations. One would completely eliminate the Federal Environmental Protection Agency; another cites the need for fewer regulations for oil drilling; many propose drilling in

pristine areas or National Parks; virtually all support the tar-sands oil pipeline; etc.

Many office holders support cutting funds for many environmental programs at both the state and Federal levels. In our state, a bill would forbid any environmental regulations greater than those at the Federal level.

IF we are to protect our environment – and, especially, our water resources – ALL OF US need to speak up and make our voices heard for the protection of our greatest natural resource – fresh water!



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The Watershed Reporter is published quarterly by the Flint River Watershed Coalition. The Coalition is dedicated to promoting the importance of protecting our natural resources. It works closely with the public and with private agencies and citizens' groups in carrying out its mission.

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FRWC Board meetings are held  
the third Friday of the month.

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## 10 QUESTIONS WITH... DEREK BRADSHAW FRWC BOARD MEMBER



Derek Bradshaw

1. Why are you a member of /work for/volunteer for the FRWC?

I was impressed with the overall professional commitment of the staff in effecting change in the watershed.

2. What FRWC programs do you participate in?

As I am a brand new member I have yet to participate in any of the wonderful programs, but am very excited about the river clean-ups and how we can partner with the Household Hazardous Waste collections that I oversee.

3. When did you first get involved in the FRWC?

I first became involved with FRWC in the spring of 2010.

4. What's your favorite part of the watershed?

The water, of course. Well, the shed's kinda nice too. Both.

5. What is the most interesting thing you have seen in the watershed (wildlife, garbage, someone doing something unexpected, etc.)

Shopping carts!. It is 5 miles from the nearest Meijer.

6. What's your favorite river (any river) memory?

My favorite river memory was the first time I went "canoeing" on the Rifle River in northern Michigan. Back home, canoeing is quite a serious & taxing sport (canoeing/camping for multiple days w/ plenty of gear to haul around). The laid back style of canoeing on the Rifle (six-pack and some bungee cords) was a welcomed retreat from back home.

7. What worries you most about the watershed?

The average Joe's misunderstanding of the interconnectedness of it all. A quart of oil here, or a pesticide application there all ends up underwater somewhere. Simple education can go a long way in this business.

8. What gives you the most hope?

Active organizations like the FRWC, with an active volunteer base who are ready and willing to help change along.

9. If you could change one thing to help improve the watershed, what would it be?

Local planning structure. Important decisions are made everyday for close knit communities, but impact so many downstream! Planning on a regional/ watershed basis makes so much sense.

10. What is your river/watershed/environmental/conservation hero?

My man, David Suzuki. I grew up watching his weekly show "The Nature of Things" on the CBC Network.

## What is your favorite way to connect with the FRWC online?





*Brent Nickola  
FRWC Board Chair*

## BEST FISHING TRIP EVER

Several years ago I attempted to share fishing the Flint River with my father. Unfortunately the day was a bust. I could not put my finger on what the problem was that day. We were not catching fish and my Dad had no enthusiasm to fish the river. It turned out that he was suffering from heart disease and would end up in the hospital that evening to undergo heart surgery. Not a good fishing day!

On a Saturday in this past July I woke up and did my usual routine. Make the coffee, feed my daughter and surf the web for a little bit. I checked a website to see how high the river was and was delighted to discover the river had finally dropped to a fishable level. All the signals were there for a stellar fishing day. The weather was right, the river was right, and I knew I needed to take my Dad fishing.

We launched our boat and it took Dad about an hour to get the hang of things. Eventually he hooked into his first Flint River smallmouth, a respectable 14 inch female. Dad soon hooked up on a dozen or more fish. He was absolutely amazed by the fishery in the Flint. "Wow, I never knew that

such a good fishery was this close to my home," he said after several more fish. Before the day was over Dad had boated over 40 fish including several trophies. The largest fish of the day was a 20 inch bruiser that drug our canoe into a bolder field and nearly caused us to capsize. What a hoot!



*Dad with the 20 inch smallmouth that almost capsized our canoe*

The Flint River delivered once again and I made a river advocate out of another person. It is amazing to me how people still don't understand what a healthy and great river we have in our community. The day after the trip I spoke with my mother

and asked her if my Dad had said anything about the trip. Her response? "Best fishing trip ever." No small complement from a guy who has chased fish all over the Great Lakes, including parts of northern Canada.

We have a great river here folks, let's be proud of it and thanks for helping us to protect it.

## COCA-COLA GIVES BACK TO COMMUNITY

Earlier this year, in conjunction with the Company's 125th anniversary, local Coca-Cola associates broke ground on a community garden at the Flint Distribution Center.

The garden will provide local residents access to fresh produce, free of charge. The project included the use of repurposed Coca-Cola syrup barrels to create a sustainable water supply for the vegetation.

In conjunction with the plantings, Coca-Cola associates distributed 125 rain barrels to area residents. The barrels are repurposed Coca-Cola syrup barrels, retrofitted for residential rain harvesting use in home gardens, schools and community gardens. The use of Coca-Cola rain barrels helps to support the Company's goal to safely return to nature and our communities an amount of water equivalent to what is used in their production. Collecting storm water in rain barrels also helps stem the amount of runoff that occurs in urban areas and reduce harmful effects to the river basin.

"As we celebrate 125 years, we are proud to continue to support the community in which we do business through employee engagement and sustainable initiatives such as the community garden," said Jeff Chase, Coca-Cola Flint Distribution Center Manager.

Coca-Cola is committed to sustainable and responsible growth, and recognizes the health of our business is directly linked to the health of the environment. As a result, the company's focus is on areas where they have the most significant impact and the most potential to make positive contributions: water

stewardship, sustainable packaging, and energy efficiency and climate protection.

Since 2005, Coca-Cola has saved more than 3 billion gallons of water through reduction efforts across all facilities in the U.S., hitting these targets through technologies such as water reclaim systems, replacement of water rinsers with air rinsers, dry lube technology and others.

Additionally, Coca-Cola supports more than 50 community watershed projects around the country. These projects return an estimated 13% of our product volume back to nature. The company's goal for 2011 is to increase this replenishment volume to 17%.



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# SUNDAY RIDES STILL POPULAR

The Sunday rides along the Flint River Trail have continued to be popular in what I believe is the fifteenth year of the Friends of the Flint River Trail program. Every single Sunday this summer, we have had one or more new, first-time, riders – and our riders have come from about 25 different zip codes so far. The rides start at 2:00 PM from the Flint Farmers' Market – EVERY Sunday May through October. Our real goal is to introduce riders to the trail so that they will be comfortable riding the trail on their own time and own schedules. In addition, we lead rides on various other trails around mid-Michigan every 'Second Saturday' of our ride months. In partnership with other



groups, we are strong advocates for trail improvements and expansion. Labor Day week-end we had three new families – including five children ages about 9-14 join us: it's a great family outing for a Sunday afternoon. Groups who might want to arrange a 'special ride' are welcome to contact leaders Bruce Nieuwenhuis (bnbaton@gmail.com) or Jack Minore (jacksonmin@aol.com). In addition to the rides, several members of our group have put in regular volunteer hours mowing, cleaning and trimming along the trail to make for a more pleasant ride. Watch for our major clean-up the last Saturday in April – prepping the trail for our first 2012 ride – the first Sunday in May!

## IS IT GOOD? OR BAD??

A question we are frequently asked of the Flint River. The answer: It depends on all of us! This summer we had many individuals like you working to protect, preserve and improve the Flint River Watershed. We also had a large number of families having healthy fun on (and in) the Flint River.

### Good?

Yes! The overwhelming majority of the Flint River watershed is healthy and vibrant. Participants in our summer



*Sue Lossing (front) provides students with hands on storm drain education*

Our Water programs saw this first hand through our various fun, healthy, educational activities. Paddlers coasted easily along the Flint River and enjoyed all the beautiful sights along

the way. Some stopped paddling to swim in the river while others took pleasure with the multiple bald eagle sightings. Others spotted birds such as kingfishers and great blue herons along with the occasional fisherman.

As paddler *M a d o n n a Aubrey* stated "I finished in less than 3 hours – had a great morning – I could have gone another 3 hours."

**Bad?** Storm water runoff can carry contaminants left on our

lawns, streets, and parking lots directly to our streams via our system of storm drains. The Our Water Storm Water Awareness program informs residents of simple things people like you can do to easily prevent this contamination.

## CITY OF FLINT TO TERMINATE LEAF PICK UP PROGRAM

Flint residents traditionally rake their leaves into the street for collection by the city. Due to budget cuts, this service will NOT be offered this year. We understand this poses a dilemma for area residents, but we strongly encourage you to not simply rake into the street anyway. Leaves left in the gutter not only create an eyesore in our neighborhoods, but also could result in significant nutrient contamination to the Flint River. Alternatives for homeowners include:

- Bagging your leaves - compost collection will continue through the end of November.
- Mowing them into your lawn (consider it free fertilizer, and some research has shown maple leaves serve as an herbicide to spring dandelions)
- Composting them in your own pile, garden, and flower beds.

A Google search that contains the search term "what to do with leaves" will provide ample guidance for all of the above. Connect with us on Facebook, and tell us what you are doing with your leaves this fall.

This summer, members of the Genesee Regional Chamber of Commerce's Summer Youth Initiative team focused on providing storm drain education to over 200 residents around Thread Lake. We are looking for your help to conduct similar outreach in Gilkey Creek and Thread Creek sub-watersheds. Sign on now to help make a difference. Join the Storm Water Awareness Team by contacting Sue Lossing: (810) 767-9491; [SLossing@FlintRiver.org](mailto:SLossing@FlintRiver.org)

## LAPEER HAPPENINGS

Thanks to John Jill, the store manager at Rowleys Tires and Automotive Services in Lapeer for disposing of a batch of tires removed from the South Branch by 7th grade Chatfield Students.

Thanks to the Lapeer Sunrise Kiwanis for sponsoring a "river day" for Lapeer Community School students in the Federal Free and Reduced Lunch program. These students learned about the FRWC, our relationship with the river, and took a canoe trip with Kiwanis mentors on the Rotary to Saginaw section of the South Branch. For most of these 4th-6th grade students, it was their first time canoeing and an opportunity they normally wouldn't have access to.

Thanks to the Lapeer Juvenile Probate Program for their participation in our canoe pathway project. In their most recent effort, two staff members and five high school students removed logjams in four hour session on the South Branch. They worked very hard and were able to appreciate the tremendous effort that our local Rotary/DNR /Lapeer Chapter partnership provides each season. Some of these students also participated in the Spring Cleanup and are competing for the Golden Glove Award! We look forward to our working partnership with this program.

And a special thanks to our members, providing the support and resources to make the three previous projects happen. We are building community, we are giving voice to this river, we are making a difference!

## MEMBERSHIP CONNECTIONS

We continue to reach out and connect with many individuals, families, and groups who share our passion to be a 'voice of the river'. Join us in thanking our most recent new and renewing members of the Flint River Watershed Coalition. These are the hard core supporters who demonstrated their commitment by making a financial contribution to support our mission. We are happy to welcome the following individuals and families to the FRWC for another great year. We cannot be successful without our members -- YOU.

**Linda Johnson Barnes**

**Linda Berker and Donald James**

**Mark Bilodeau**

**Morgan Boyer**

**Derek Bradshaw**

**Ruth Brown**

**Casey Foote**

**Earl Gravlin**

**Ben and Karen Howells**

**Joel Rash**

**James and Mary Jane**

**Richardson**

**Maureen and Ron Shoemaker**

**Allan Taylor**

**Fred and Alyce Townsend**

**Jeff and Jaime Welch**

**Norman Wing**

We would like to call special attention to the many members

who hail from the southern stretches of the watershed. We are always glad to meet and renew connections in that area. When you cross the river in Ortonville, Lapeer, or Goodrich, say hello to your neighbors. You'll know an FRWC member when you see them – they'll be sporting a look of appreciation for the wonderful natural resource that we all share. Members from these southern watershed communities include: Derek Bradshaw, Fred and Alyce Townsend, Linda Berker, Donald James, Maureen and Ron Shoemaker, and Earl Gravlin.

There are many ways to submit your membership payment to the FRWC. There is a membership application in this newsletter, you can get a welcome brochure at any of our events, or you can link to our secure on line payment option from our website. Lastly, you can call our offices at 810-767-6490 and we'll be glad to hook you up!

However you become a member of the Flint River Watershed Coalition, make sure you connect with your fellow river friends through the fellowship of the FRWC. When you look through the newsletter and review the summaries of all of our summer events and our plans for the fall, it's these types of activities that your membership sponsors.

See you on the river this fall!

## FRWC MEMBER APPLICATION - FALL 2011

name \_\_\_\_\_

organization \_\_\_\_\_

address \_\_\_\_\_

city/state \_\_\_\_\_

phone \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_ STUDENT \$10

\_\_\_\_ INDIVIDUAL \$25

\_\_\_\_ FAMILY \$40

\_\_\_\_ RIVER SPONSOR \$100

\_\_\_\_ RIVER PATRON \$250

\_\_\_\_ WATERSHED

PROTECTOR \$500

\_\_\_\_ WATERSHED

GUARANTOR \$1000

\_\_\_\_ OTHER

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Some companies will match an employee contribution to an eligible charity or non-profit organization. Please check with your employer to obtain a matching gift form, if applicable.**

Your support is sincerely appreciated. The Flint River Watershed Coalition is a not-for-profit organization with 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt status. Your contribution is tax deductible. Please make checks payable to: **Flint River Watershed Coalition or FRWC 400 N. Saginaw Street, Suite 233 Flint, MI 48502**

# MAKING NEW FRIENDS WHILE BENTHIC MONITORING

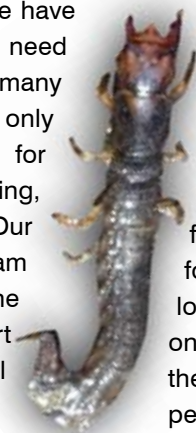
JAMIE WELCH

This past spring marked my first season coordinating the water quality monitoring program. To say my first season was a “trial by fire” would be putting it mildly. We had record setting rain, overflowing creeks, and water levels that made it impossible to monitor some of our sites. But every time I think back to last season, I have one memory that sticks with me. I was monitoring with my husband Jeff and FRWC development director Casey Foote. We were about halfway down the stream collecting when Jeff announced that this was the best job on the planet. Not only were we doing something tangible to protect our local waters, but we got to play in the water and collect cool critters while doing so. Standing in the middle of the stream on a beautiful spring morning, I had to agree.

One of the biggest misconceptions we hear about the Flint River is that it is dirty, polluted, or in worse condition than it really is. We have spots in the watershed that need improvement, but there are many more areas that are not only beautiful, but are perfect for fishing, kayaking, canoeing, wading, and swimming. Our water monitoring program helps us track the health of the entire watershed and report back to you on the overall health of our river.

We monitor twice a year—every spring and fall—and track each stream’s score from season to season. At the end of each season

just a couple of critters that monitors made friends with last spring!



our monitoring committee meets to review the data collected and assess each site, including comparing the scores from the previous seasons. If we find a site is declining, we investigate to find out why and what can be done to help that site improve.

None of this would be possible without the dedication of our volunteer monitors. Monitoring is a fun process, and easy to learn. Trainings are held each season for new monitors as well as a refresher course for our more experienced volunteers. If you are interested in learning more about monitoring, this is a perfect opportunity.

Monitoring labs this season are Thursday, September 29th and Saturday, October 1st, from 12-5 in Lapeer and in Flint. These labs are where our monitors bring the critters they collected at the stream for identification. Each lab has an expert or two on hand to help with identification and verify your samples. We also have our “Master Identifiers” again this season who will conduct more detailed identification which ultimately tells us more about the stream you just sampled. Feel free to stick around and see what they find! This program has something for everyone, from the person who loves getting out into nature to the one who enjoys being in the labs using the microscopes to get up close and personal to their critters.

So what are you waiting for? Contact Jaime Welch at [jwelch@flinriver.org](mailto:jwelch@flinriver.org) or 810-767-7140 to volunteer or to find out more information about this program.

## CREATING MEMORIES THAT LAST A LIFETIME ON THE FLINT RIVER

Remember early outdoor moments when you were a kid? Have you ever said “I remember when...?” This summer, through the Our Water program, we were fortunate to create many of these moments for our members. Here is a collection of stories from the summer.

During the Montrose to Birch Run paddle, Grandpa Brad and his grandkids could be heard laughing as they spent as much time playing in the water as they did in the canoe. They spotted clams, fish, and learned about the caddisfly cases stuck on rocks that were pulled from the river. (A good indication of a healthy stream-caddisfly with cases are sensitive to poor water quality.)

Five members of the Wisenbaugh family, the youngest age 7, split themselves between two canoes and did wonderfully! They joined people from Fenton, Swartz Creek, Burton, Holly, Clarkston, Birch Run, and Rochester Hills. They enjoyed being able to safely recreate on this local, available, and affordable resource.

This year the Romankewiz family not only joined us on the Our Water walks and paddling events, but took their participation one step further and volunteered for our storm drain stenciling program. Thanks to their efforts and with the assistance of two Sierra Club members, over 100 Burton residents in the Thread Creek sub-watershed received storm water awareness information and simple things they can do to keep contaminants from entering Thread Creek.

Check us out for fall events and to put your interests in for 2012 Our Water programs! Contact Sue Lossing at (810) 767-9491; [SLossing@FlintRiver.org](mailto:SLossing@FlintRiver.org)

# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**DON'T MISS OUT ON TIME-SENSITIVE INFORMATION!**

SUBSCRIBE TO OUR WEEKLY E-NEWSLETTER, "THE RIPPLES" BY VISITING US ONLINE AT [WWW.FLINTRIVER.ORG](http://WWW.FLINTRIVER.ORG) OR CALL THE OFFICE: 810-767-6490  
ALSO, YOU CAN BECOME OUR "FAN" ON FACEBOOK BY SEARCHING FLINT RIVER WATERSHED COALITION.

MONTH	DATE/DAY	EVENT
<b>SEPT</b>	22 THU	MiCorps Water Monitoring Training
	23 FRI	Order Deadline: <b>Genesee</b> Conservation District Tree Sales
	23 FRI	Flint River Paddlers: Fall Equinox Autumn Paddle
	24 SAT	Applewood: Fall Harvest Festival
	25 SUN	FFRT Sunday Bike Ride
	28 WED	Lapeer FRWC Chapter: Conservation Efforts for River Preservation & Paddling
	29 THU	MiCorps Water Monitor Day & Lab Date I
30 FRI	Order Deadline: <b>Lapeer</b> Conservation District Tree Sales	
<b>OCTOBER</b>	1 SAT	MiCorps Monitoring Day & Lab Date II
	2 SUN	FFRT Sunday Bike Ride
	5 WED	Lapeer FRWC Chapter: Conservation Efforts for River Preservation & Paddling
	5 WED	Genesee Belle: October Lunch Cruise, Stepping Stone Falls, Cost/Registration
	6 THU	Six Rivers Regional Land Conservancy: Flint River Paddle/Lapeer
	8 SAT	FFRT 2nd Saturday Bike Ride
	8 SAT	Genesee & Lapeer Conservation District Tree Pick-up
	8 SAT	Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day (Carman/Ainsworth HS & Flint East Water Center)
	9 SUN	FFRT Sunday Bike Ride
	12 WED	Lapeer FRWC Chapter: Conservation Efforts for River Preservation and Paddling
	12 WED	Genesee Belle: October Lunch Cruise, Stepping Stone Falls, Cost/Registration
	16 SUN	FFRT Sunday Bike Ride
	18 TUE	Lapeer Chapter, FRWC Meeting
	19 WED	Lapeer FRWC Chapter: Conservation Efforts for River Preservation and Paddling
	19 WED	Genesee Belle: October Lunch Cruise, Stepping Stone Falls, Cost/Registration
	21 FRI	FRWC Board Meeting
	23 SUN	FFRT Sunday Bike Ride
	26 WED	Genesee Belle: October Lunch Cruise, Stepping Stone Falls, Cost/Registration
	29 SAT	Sierra Club Hike: Lapeer State Game Area & Center Cranberry Bog
30 SUN	FFRT Sunday Bike Ride: Last Scheduled Ride for the Season	
<b>NOV</b>	5 SAT	Keep Genesee County Beautiful: Tree Tenders Urban Tree Planting
	15 TUE	Lapeer Chapter, FRWC Meeting
	18 FRI	FRWC Board Meeting
<b>JAN</b>	16 MON	FRWC Community Watershed Service Training (MLK Day)
	26 THU (tentative)	Celebrate! FRWC Annual Meeting: Dinner and Auction



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## MEMBERS AND VOLUNTEERS PROVIDE ESSENTIAL BUILDING BLOCKS

The Flint River Watershed would like to sincerely thank all of our members and volunteers! Your donations have helped make this year's Flint River GREEN program our most successful ever! We mentored over 3,500 young students by helping them conduct scientific water testing on the Flint River. Students presented their collected data at the student summit and made recommendations on how they can help protect, preserve, and improve the Flint River.

Contributions from sponsors and individual donors enabled us to organize the spring cleanup this year where we successfully removed over 40 tires, 150 bags of trash and other large items that included an old boat, fencing and building materials, carpeting, and shopping carts from the banks of the river.

We have put your money to work locally by conducting our benthic monitoring

program this spring and fall. We track the health of the river that is vital to our local environment. This data is utilized

**Our success as an organization is due to great members like you who believe in our mission, that the Flint River is a valuable asset in our community to protect, preserve, and improve.**

by state and local officials, and is posted on our website so you can track the health of the river in your area.

As you can see, your membership dollars translate into real action and benefit for your local Watershed.

Please consider our request when we ask you to upgrade or renew your membership.

As a society we are becoming increasingly aware of the importance of supporting our local community. Please consider contributing to the Flint River Watershed Coalition today!

The Flint River Watershed Coalition draws together concerned citizens, local government, businesses, educational institutions, and people like you who feel the Flint River and its tributaries

are a vital resource to protect, preserve, and improve. The Coalition serves as the Voice that speaks for the entire Flint River drainage basin. We invite you to join the FRWC and consider making a tax deductible contribution to the Flint River Watershed today!