

Watershed REPORTER

PARTNERING TO PROTECT OUR NATURAL RESOURCES

APRIL 2013

PARTNER, PROTECT, IMPROVE AND PROMOTE!

REBECCA FEDEWA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Rebecca Fedewa

I have a photo of the Flint River as the background on my laptop. It was taken last summer from a helicopter at about 500 feet, during a fundraising event we held in August. It's on my computer not just because it's a pretty picture, but because it's a great conversation starter. People see it, and invariably ask where it was taken. And generally, the asker is shocked when I happily exclaim that it is their very own Flint River.

As it turns out, I all too frequently run into folks who don't recognize the Flint River for the wonderful amenity it is to all of the communities that fall within it's nearly 1,400 square miles of watershed. There are as many reasons why as there are people in the watershed. But each day, the folks involved with the Flint River Watershed Coalition—volunteers, staff, board members, or other advocates—are working to advance our mission to protect, preserve, and improve this vital resource. Now I'd like to add one more verb to that statement: Promote!

Our river is beautiful! Our river is full of recreation opportunities! Our river provides important economic benefits to our community, in addition to serving as the backup water supply for thousands! Our river matters!!!

You can help us make sure that message gets out.

We have seen many changes in the last five or so years – there are new businesses focused on the river, more and more people are attending our

events, and more of our elected officials are taking a serious look at what they can do to improve their communities through river conservation and protection. We are so excited about this, but we know that our "Voice" for the Flint River needs to continue to expand. So that when people one day see an uncommonly beautiful picture of a river, they will say "Hey, that's the pedestrian bridge over the Flint River in Flushing!" or "I canoed that stretch just last week!" or "My kids and I walk on that trail a few times a week!" rather than "Oh, was that taken somewhere up north?"



Aerial view of Flint River

Photo: Gary Nickols

THE FLINT RIVER CLEAN TEAM 2013

You are invited to join the Flint River Watershed Coalition in its mission to protect, preserve, and improve the Flint River watershed at our annual Flint River & Community Clean-Up Day! We will be collecting trash and natural debris from the river, its banks, and surrounding areas.

This year's clean-up will be held on April 27th from 9:00am-12:00pm. An updated list of clean-up sites, as well as other information is on our website: www.flintriver.org. Or visit our Facebook page and "Like" us to share this event with your friends or organization! Lunch is provided to all volunteers.

This is a great opportunity for all community



members, especially students and scouts in need of service hours. This is a fun day of environmental stewardship and community connectedness.

Find something truly unique or

unusual, and you could be a contender for the coveted Golden Gloves Award! Jeff Welch was 2012's winner with his Pfeiffer's Beer can circa 1955. What item will win this year's prize? Come and find out! Be a champion for the Flint River, and you could be the next winner!

No pre-registration is required to be a volunteer at the Flint River & Community Clean-Up. Just show up at your site on April 27. We do ask that groups of five or more call us in advance so that we can have enough supplies for everyone. If you have a large group, or are interested in sponsoring the clean-up, please contact Holly Rosser at (810) 767-9491 or send her an e-mail at hrosser@flintriver.org.



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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 private agencies and citizens' groups in carrying out its mission.

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SUNDAY RIDES ARE COMING SOON

Spring has arrived, and it's time to get those bicycles tuned up, tires checked, and 'get stretching'; the bike riding season is upon us! As has occurred for the past 15 years, the Friends of the Flint River Trail will start the regular Sunday rides on the first Sunday in May (May 5th). They will continue at 2:00 PM EVERY Sunday through October from the Flint Farmers' Market. These are pleasant, leisurely rides of about 10-12 miles in length along the Flint River Trail. There is no need for advance registration: Just "show up and ride." Helmets are STRONGLY recommended. Light refreshments are available after each ride.

In addition, the FFRT schedules Saturday rides on other mid-Michigan trails within an hour's drive from Flint. This year, the rides will be on the third Saturday of each month, May through October. Our first ride will be on the Southern Links Trail from Columbiaville to Otter Lake, Millington and back. The total ride is about 20 miles with a brief rest stop in Millington. Questions about the rides can be directed to Jack Minore at jacksonmin@aol.com or to Bruce Nieuwenhuis at bnbaton@gmail.com.

Please join us for the trail and river clean-up from 9am to noon on the last Saturday in April. We will meet at the Vietnam Veterans Park on the west side of the river, just south of E. Hamilton Ave. Teams will be dispatched from there to clean and groom the trail to prepare for the first Sunday ride on May 5th. Lunch will follow.



OTHER RIDES

Watch for two new rides in Flint this year. On May 11th, the Crim will sponsor the inaugural "Tour de Crim," a 10 mile ride along the 'blue line' of the Crim Route. This is a non-competitive ride with some fun side attractions. And on June 8th, the Health Department will sponsor a family-friendly ride – with details yet to be announced.

GET TO KNOW THE FLINT RIVER FROM THE VIP SECTION!

The Flint River is truly amazing and there is no better way to see it than from in a kayak or canoe floating down stream. Every year we meet people who think they have to go north to kayak. We love it when people come out and experience that "up north" feeling by floating down a river that is right in their own back yard. The Flint River has many views, from small rapids to lazy streams to calm lakes surrounded by birds that are just waiting for our paddlers to enjoy. You never know what you will see during our paddles, but we guarantee it will be an experience you won't soon forget. From bald eagles to turkeys to musicians playing the bagpipes, we have seen and heard many natural wonders during our trips. Just when we think we have seen

everything there is to see, the river pulls out another surprise for us.

Our paddles, as we call our canoe/kayak trips, are for all levels of experience. You don't even need to own your own kayak or canoe to come along! We can arrange for a rental if you need it and transportation is always provided. The FRWC paddles are part of the 'Our Water' program generously sponsored by the Genesee County Drain Commission.

Our first paddle is scheduled for Saturday, May 25th at 10 am from Holloway Dam to Irish Road, a truly gorgeous stretch of the river. **We will be holding two paddles a month from June through September, weather permitting.** Check

out our calendar or our paddles webpage for more information or contact Jaime Welch at 810-767-7140 or jwelch@flinriver.org. Hope to see you on the river this summer!



FIND YOUR FAVORITE PLACE IN THE WATERSHED

AMY McMILLAN, BOARD CHAIR



Amy McMillan

Spring 2013 made its official arrival at 7:02 a.m. on March 20. As a tried and true fan of any season that does not begin with a "W", I faithfully counted the days until spring returned pretty much since the beginning of the 2012 "W" season.

The Flint River Watershed is where I look to find the first signs of spring each year. I can count on seeing my first robins along the shores of Mott Lake, people breaking out their fishing poles up and down the Flint River, just testing the water and watching for walleye. The sound of water rushing under the little footbridge over the Kearsley Creek as it runs through my neighborhood

unrestrained by an icy crust? Music to my newly earmuff-free ears.

If you don't yet have a favorite place in the Watershed to greet spring in all of its green glory, make 2013 the year that you set out to explore the tremendous natural resource that is right here in our own backyard. Mark your calendar, put some air in your tires, and make plans to join the Friends of the Flint River Trail for a Sunday bike ride. Put on a PFD and register for one of the FRWC's paddling events. Head out to For-Mar, hike out into the woods, and hear the post-winter power of the Kearsley Creek as it rushes and roars under the footbridges that link the trails.

Still not sure where the best spot is to welcome spring? Give the friendly and informative Flint River Watershed Coalition staff a call or send us an email. The natural wonders of the watershed await!

SPRING MONITORING

It is getting to be that time of year again! The weather is slowly warming up, grass is starting to turn green, and flowers are thinking about making an appearance. That means that monitoring season is almost here! Every spring and fall the FRWC spends two weeks doing water quality monitoring at 34 sites around the watershed. Volunteer monitors visit their spot and complete site assessments, including collecting benthic samples (such as dragonfly nymphs and caddisfly larvae). The samples are then taken back to one of our lab locations in Genesee or Lapeer County for identification, and those identifications are verified by our Master Identifiers. From that information we are able to tell how healthy our local streams are and identify problem areas. We also share our results with several local and state agencies. This information is available on our website under the Water Monitoring tab.

We are always looking for volunteers. This is a great way to make a difference in

the watershed and to get family and friends involved in protecting our precious waterways. To find out more, attend our training session on Thursday, April 11th with 2 times available, either 1-4 pm or 5-8 pm at Jack Abernathy Park in Davison. We will walk you through the process and show you where and what to look for, and then pair you up with an experienced monitor at one of our sites.

Our lab days for spring monitoring will be Sunday, April 21st, from 12-5 and Thursday, May 2nd from 12-6 in Genesee County and on Saturday, May 4th from 12-4 pm in Lapeer county. With 34 sites around the watershed, we are sure to have something close to you. Find out how your local stream scores and what is living under that seemingly calm

surface. Contact Jaime Welch at 810-767-7140 or jwtelch@flintriver.org for information or to reserve a spot at the training session.



The FRWC is also pleased to announce that we have expanded our monitoring program, and are now studying the impact of road salting on our streams and how it is affecting the local ecology. We have started out with three sites that we visit twice a month all year long to take samples and assess the specific conductivity and chloride levels. We recently started this program, made possible by a grant from the University of Wisconsin, and are very excited to see what the data shows in the coming months.

If you are interested in finding out more about this new program or in volunteering, contact Jaime Welch for more information.

WATERSHED PROJECT 2013



After a very successful sign up last year, the Genesee Conservation District and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service are gearing up for 2013. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program, commonly referred to as EQIP, is the primary tool we are using to clean up waterways in Genesee County and the Saginaw Bay area.

currently working toward the completion of nearly 40 applications representing several thousand acres of crop and forest land. Applications for EQIP are accepted year round and our staff is always available for assistance.

EQIP is a program that considers conservation and production agriculture as having compatible goals. Through it, we are able to offer technical assistance and cost share to producers for the implementation of conservation practices. These practices support environmental quality along with the productivity of local farms and are typically aimed at improving the value of our water, soil and wildlife habitat.

We are anticipating a second EQIP sign up this spring that will be funded through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. This sign up will likely target Swartz Creek and Kearsley Creek watersheds here in Genesee County. Informational meetings about this project will be held at the end of March, however specific dates have not been determined at this point.

For more information on NRCS programs, the watershed project or if you would like to attend one of our upcoming meetings, please contact one of our Soil Conservation Technicians: Brian Schorr (brian.schorr@mi.nacdnet.net) and Robert Carlin (robert.carlin@mi.nacdnet.net). Reach us by phone at (810) 230-8766 extension 3.

The first statewide EQIP sign up is already underway and we are

2013 VOICE OF THE RIVER



ANNUAL GATHERING

PLACE-MAKING was the topic, and the PLACE to be in January was the 'Voice of the River' Annual Gathering!

Each year, the Flint River Watershed Coalition holds a celebration to thank our wonderful supporters and volunteers, and to give everyone a preview of the upcoming river happenings. Following this tradition, on January 31, 2013 the 'Voice of the River' Annual Gathering was held at the Stonegate Banquet Centre in Davison. Over 125 brave river enthusiasts risked the inclement weather to join us.



Our keynote speaker was Mr. Rodney Stokes, appointee of Governor Rick Snyder, leading the governor's initiative on CITY PLACEMAKING.

'Placemaking' is a mindset that emphasizes that economic development and community development go hand in hand. Mr. Stokes shared his regional experiences related this topic, and provided many examples of the importance of the Flint River and our watershed in the economic success of the surrounding communities and Michigan. He affirmed our conviction that the Flint River is an important PLACE to all of us.

Our partners from the Genesee Conservation District also joined us at the meeting to give a short presentation on what they are doing



in the watershed. It's gratifying when we can collaborate with other organizations in ways that provide benefits to both groups.

After the speeches, the Annual Gathering gave way to an important FRWC ritual, the presentation of awards to those who have had a positive impact in the watershed in the past year. The Joe Leonardi Leadership Award was presented to Steve Kress and Steve Smith, both of Lapeer. The dedication of these two individuals has been evidenced by their sustained volunteerism throughout the year by working with youth groups and the Lapeer Chapter on the canoe path clearing effort, by raising funds for the work, and maintaining



equipment. Their efforts in the watershed and in their communities showed true leadership and commitment. We were honored that they could be present to accept their award. The Dr. Gary Pace Volunteer of the Year Award was bestowed on one of our long term workers, Earl Gravlin. Earl was one of the first volunteers involved in the FRWC Stream Obstruction Removal Project. Since that effort started in 2005, Earl has put in well over 200 hours, all on a volunteer basis. We admire his skill and appreciate his generosity. The coveted 'Golden Gloves' were presented to Jeff Welch for the cleanup work that he did at the Flint Farmers' Market site. As part of the Flint River and Community Clean Up effort, Jeff accomplished something that no has done in 57 years – He pulled a Pfeiffers beer from the banks of the river. Jeff did a lot of research on the brand, but based on the condition of the can, he won't be partaking of this popular

Detroit beer that hasn't been brewed since 1955. Special recognition was given to Jeff Spinney, the intrepid pilot who donated his



time, expertise, and gas to help raise funds for the FRWC during our "Fun OVER The Flint River" fundraising event held in the summer. Oh, did we mention that he donated his helicopter too, so that our major donors could view the river from hundreds of feet over the watershed. Jeff deserved the recognition and appreciation that he received.

The Annual Gathering is a fifteen year tradition of the Flint River Watershed Coalition. It's our way of recognizing all those who partner with us in our river mission. We appreciate all those who participated in the event and who were so generous in our fundraising.

PLACE the last Thursday of January 2014 on your calendar for next year's event.



MANY THANKS TO OUR FUND RAISING PARTNERS!

The fundraising at the Annual Gathering was a success also. We raised almost \$14,000 for our 2013 programs. These funds will help us carry out the promise that we all made at the meeting in January, to be a collective 'voice of the river.' Congratulations to everyone who was a successful bidder on our great auction offerings, and to those who purchased a chance to win \$269 in the 50/50 drawing. Everyone enjoyed the fundraising, and it certainly helped us out.

The Annual Gathering would not have been possible without the financial support of our Event Sponsors. They are:

Pike- \$1,500 Supporter



Pike - \$1,000 Supporter



*Jeff Wright,
Genesee County Drain Commissioner*

Walleye - \$500 Supporter



Bass - \$250 Supporter



*Dr. Robert McAllister in loving
memory of Donna K. McAllister*

Jim & Andrea Ananich



Blue Gill - \$100 Supporter



Atwood Stadium Authority

Ernest Carter

Deb Cherry,

Genesee County Treasurer

John and Penny Kreucher



Gerry & Shelly Masters



*Steve's Plumbing & Heating
Company, Inc.*

*Scott & Ahlissa Vaubel
Vern's Collision & Glass*

Again this year we were challenged by an anonymous donor to raise \$2,000 during the silent auction. We were able to surpass our goal of \$2,000 and receive a generous 3:1 match on the revenues. Thank you to all our donors and bidders who helped us meet this challenge. Please thank our silent auction donors if you see them on the river, and make sure to support their business when you are looking for great products and services.

Silent Auction Donors

Marilyn Alvey, Shaklee Products

Jim Ananich

Dave Beaulieu

Ellen Brothers

Sharon Harrison Burris

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Sabrina Race of Creative Cleaning

Suzanne & Holly Rosser

Heather Sisto

University of Michigan-Flint Rec Center

The Yoga Loft

Gabe Zawadzki

A GREAT START TO A GREAT YEAR

We have started the year out right, and we're going to keep at it. Our members are the reason for the success of FRWC programs. A contribution of any level helps put a monitoring volunteer IN the river, allows our bikers to enjoy the trail that runs BY the river, and provides the tools to educate the river enthusiasts of the future in the GREEN curriculum.

You are going to read a lot about our spring and summer programs in this edition of the Watershed Reporter. But there is no way that we could organize any activities without the financial support of our members. We want to recognize all of our new and renewing individuals and families who generously supported the FRWC since the last newsletter was publicized. They are:

Jennifer Acree
 Kathleen Bach
 Dave Beaulieu
 Morgan Boyer
 Benjamin Brock
 Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Burroughs
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 (Jeans Friday)
 Doug Weiland*
 William and Carol Welch
 Dave Woolfenden

There are many ways that our supporters can become members of the Flint River Watershed Coalition. We accept contributions in the traditional way with cash and checks, but now, at any time during the year, members can use the convenience of the internet. By going to the FRWC website at www.flintriver.org and pressing the 'Donate Now through Network for Good' button on the home page, credit card users can become new members or renew their membership in the Coalition. Starting this year, we can now take credit card information over the phone and process your membership through a secure payment option that allows you to receive an immediate confirmation by e-mail.

There are seven levels of membership available. Please contact any one of our Board members or staff if you are interested in membership or volunteer opportunities with the Coalition. Also, included with this newsletter is an application form. Please feel free to detach this and give it to an individual or business that may be interested in joining the FRWC. Or, call our offices and we will be glad to reach out to them on your behalf.

**Designates a membership of \$100 or greater.*

Become a member of FRWC now!

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - APRIL 2013

name _____
 organization _____
 address _____
 city/state/zip _____
 phone (h) _____ (c) _____
 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**



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GEARING UP FOR GREEN!



The Flint River Watershed Coalition is pleased to announce that season GREEN (Global River Environmental Education Network), is in full swing!

Our teachers and mentors attended a Professional Development Day, March 22nd at Mott Community College. Here, teachers learned about the water quality tests that their students will use when they venture out to measure the health of the water within the Flint River watershed. Students and teachers will begin their testing the week of Earth Day, April 22nd, 2013. The finale to the GREEN season will

be at our annual Student Summit, held on May 17th from 8:00am-2:00pm at Kettering University.

At the Summit, students from Genesee, Lapeer, Saginaw, and Oakland counties will present their water quality findings to their peers and community members. Following their presentations, students take part in fun and educational break-out sessions. Sessions tentatively scheduled for this year include: Sewer CSI, Bee Keeping, Edible Plants, Fly-tying, a tour of the new developments at



the Chevy in the Hole site, and much more! The community is invited to come and see the student presentations and support their hard work in protecting the environment.

If you would like more information about GREEN, the Student Summit, or would like to volunteer, please contact Holly Rosser at (810) 767-9491 or by email at hrosser@flinriver.org. Go GREEN and please visit our website for more information and updates!

