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In the past year, CRA has completed Wild Link plans for 12 owners, and on-the-ground habitat improvement projects on 6 properties, all critical “connecting” parcels that will help preserve and enhance connected habitat for wildlife.

Current financial support for Wild Link is provided by the Frey Foundation, the Michigan Coastal Management Program, the Great Lakes Coastal Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Rural Business Enterprise Grant program of the U.S Department of Agriculture, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Transportation Enhancement Program, and individual donors.

Protecting an Urban Oasis

Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy (GTRLC) worked with Garfield Township, the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF), the YMCA, a handful of farsighted donors, and local community organizations and leaders to effectively protect a long swath of the irreplaceable Boardman River Valley.

The project has created a publicly-owned linear trail along the Boardman River, all the way from South Airport Road to Bietner Park — more than 3.5 miles long.

“Township Supervisor Lee Wilson and his key staff like Aaron Mead and Gerry Harsch — they were determined, creative, and had a vision” said GTRLC Executive Director Glen Chown. “They stuck to it until we were done.”

It’s a beautiful piece of the Boardman River, set apart from its urban landscape, and connecting the trail with Grand Traverse County’s Nature Education Reserve.

GT Conservation District updates Boardman River and Yuba Creek erosion surveys

It was fourteen years ago when the Grand Traverse Conservation District completed the original Boardman River erosion inventory where more than 600 eroding sites were dumping sediment into the River system. Since then, the District, through their Boardman River Project, has restored more than 200 of these sites.

This summer, Conservation District staff is updating the erosion surveys for both the Boardman and Yuba Creek watersheds.

“This is a critical ‘next step’ especially in our efforts to restore and protect the Boardman River Watershed” says Steve Largent,

Boardman River Project Director.

“Updating the inventory will allow us to inspect the sites we’ve restored over the past twelve years to make sure the erosion control practices installed are functioning as designed.”

The inventories will become part of the larger Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Protection Plan.

Funding for this effort is provided through Rotary’s Good Works Fund, the Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay, and the Grand Traverse Conservation District.

Finding Common Ground: Exploring Opportunities for Joint Municipal Planning Around GT Bay

The Northwest Michigan Council of Governments received a grant from the Michigan Coastal Management Program in the Department of Environmental Quality to implement a joint planning project around Grand Traverse Bay. Additional funding for the project was provided by the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation with in-kind assistance from the Traverse Area Chamber of Commerce New Designs for Growth, The Watershed Center and MSU Extension. This project includes the townships, villages, and cities bordering Grand Traverse Bay.

A series of three workshops were offered to municipal officials at three locations in April, May and June:

1. Training session: legislative options and opportunities; scientific data and issues; and the Grand Traverse Bay Protection Plan.

2. The working session: assessments of master plans and zoning ordinances; common issues; and resources to build capacity.

3. The action session: barriers to joint planning; model ordinances; summary assessment on zoning and the environment; and suggested actions to work together in the future.

These workshops received many compliments for bringing the local governments together. The next phase of the project is bringing the sub-regions together as a whole to go over the common issues and barriers and map out a strategy plan for working together.

Clean Boating

This spring, Grand Traverse Baykeeper John Nelson delivered more than 300 clean boating information packets to area marinas for distribution to seasonal slip owners. The packet included a bilge sponge, the Center’s Clean Boating flyer and information about the two different types of bilge sponges that were dis-



Above, Boardman River Project Director Steve Largent at work conducting erosion site inventory on the Boardman. Below, A canoe slide below Sabin Dam, which helps control erosion caused by portaging canoeists, was built by the Grand Traverse Conservation District as part of a large, multi-year \$357,000 Clean Michigan Initiative grant. Local communities kicked in more than \$600,000 of cash, in-kind and other support for this project.



tributed.

One sponge was a polymer product from Abtech which absorbs hydrocarbons and renders them inert — once the sponge is full it can be disposed of in a landfill. The other product incorporated the use of microorganisms embedded in a clay substance — as the microbes digest the hydrocarbons in the bilge they convert the pollutants to a harmless fatty acid which is then discharged from

the boat via the bilge pump.

In addition, colorful and informative clean boating signage was installed at several area marinas including Clinch Park, Elmwood Township and Northport marinas. The signs outlined how to reduce fuel spills, keep the bilge clean and halt the spread of invasive species, such as zebra mussels and Eurasian milfoil.

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