



THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

FALL/WINTER 2016



PHOTO OF BOB GRANT
COURTESY OF NEIL WALLACE

From the President's Desk

Greetings Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation members,

I would like to introduce myself to you. I am Bob Grant, your newly elected ASNBAF President. I will be serving in this capacity for the next two years, and I very much look forward to the opportunity to continue the Foundation's mission of preserving, protecting, and enhancing our North Branch resource.

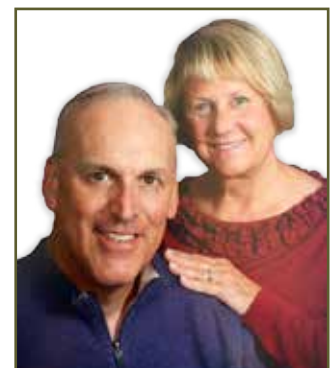
As a manner of brief introduction, I have been an Au Sable North Branch property owner since 1989. Our cabin, Highland Bend, sits atop a high bank on the lower North Branch about one mile above its' confluence with the mainstream. My time on the river goes back much further than this, though. I first fell in love with the Au Sable and its' environs when as a boy I would spend time at my grandparent's cabin which they built alongside the South Branch in 1932. My Dad handed me my first fly rod, a glass Wright and McGill, in 1968, and I've been fly fishing for speckled beauties ever since. I have had the privilege of serving on the ASNBAF board since 2012, and since 2014 have served as your Foundation's Vice-President.

This past year has been an active one for your Foundation. A sampling of the work that we and our resources have been involved in include:

- An ongoing mapping project of the North Branch to record the location of current in-stream structure, docks, islands, and erosion sites. This multi-year project when completed will provide us a baseline of information which we will be able to use towards applying for work permits. Once those permits are obtained, we can then move forward to the work at hand of controlling erosion sites, putting in place additional cover to protect spawning trout, modifying existing in-stream log structures to minimize sand collection, and improving the overall health of our river, its invertebrates, and resident trout.
- The war against that pretty but pesky flower known as Purple Loosestrife continues. This invasive non-native flowering wetland plant is a real threat to our riparian ecosystem. Native to Europe and Asia, it is aggressive and if left unchecked can spread, to the detriment of our native wetland animals and plants. Our Foundation's Riverkeepers removed 1,246 of these plants this year from the banks of our North Branch. In addition, at our request, our partners at Huron Pines assisted us by spending 24 man hours removing an additional large quantity.
- Work on the West Branch of the Big Creek continued and has nearly been completed. Overall, 14 beaver dams have been removed, erosion control has been implemented, stream flows have been restored, and gravel spawning habitat has reemerged.

In closing, I want to thank our out going President, Glen Eberly, for his passion and devotion to our river resource and this Foundation. I also wish to welcome Mike Inman as our new Vice-President. Rest assured that our organization will continue to do what we can to ensure that the overall health and vitality of our Au Sable North Branch is protected and maintained for future generations to come.

Until next time, thank you for your support and best wishes,
Bob

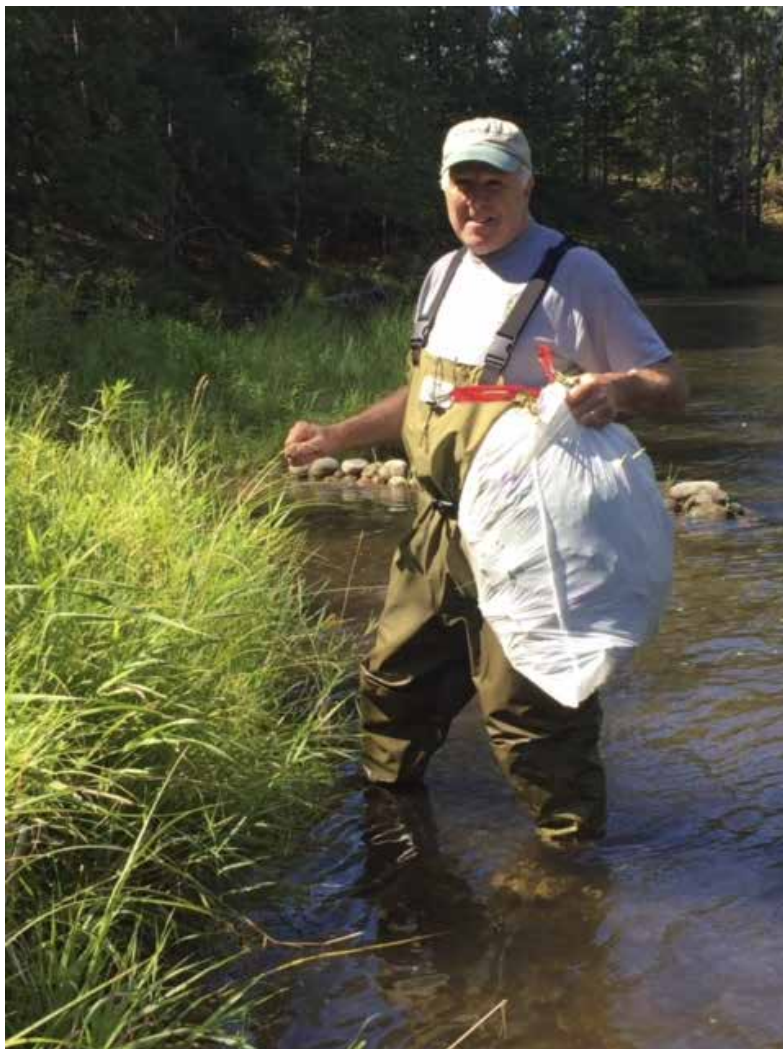


Purple Pain by Mike Inman

“I’ll get you my pretty...” A familiar line from a popular old movie which may accurately characterize our feelings about *Lythrum Salicaria* the lovely wetland perennial commonly known as Purple Loosestrife.

In late July of this year, I was copied on a succession of emails apprising the recipients that this invasive plant species had propagated well on the North Branch of the Au Sable River on the reach from Sheep’s Pasture to Kellogg’s Bridge. The emails trumpeted a call for help to eliminate the invader. I had not participated in the Foundation’s seven year effort to control the growth of this intruder, so I decided to answer the call. What could be so difficult about spending a day on our beautiful river removing a few plants? I was about to find out. I contacted Larry Warner, an experienced volunteer member of our Purple Loosestrife eradication team to offer my services.

Ah, but what to do with you my pretty? Rip off your appealing purple flowers and toss them into the river? Step on your multi-square stalked body and grind you back into the earth from whence you came? No. This fair flowered beauty requires a more disciplined approach to its demise.



Larry, my Purple Loosestrife eradication instructor shown in the picture, told me that he knew how to do it and that he had the necessary tools to do the job. All I needed to do was to bring my waders. The next morning, with waders at the ready, I rode with Larry to Kellogg’s Bridge with a hearty “let’s do this” attitude. Let the PLS plucking begin. Ah, but there’s the rub. No random plucking allowed. Larry tutored me on the proper way to terminate each individual plant. No ripping and no stomping. First, each plant has to be correctly identified. There are some close look a likes, especially Fireweed and Blue Vervain. Then the flowering top has to be carefully cut off and placed into a large plastic garbage bag as each two to seven foot plant can produce more than two million seeds annually. You don’t want those tiny seeds escaping. Finally, you spray the remaining stems and leaves of the decapitated plant with an authorized herbicide. Move on to the next plant and repeat the process.

Larry and I spent three hours or so terminating about 70 plants. In that time we hiked, forded, waded, knelt, bent over and crawled around while ousting the plants on Kellogg’s Island and the adjacent river bank. Satisfied with our haul of 5 garbage bags filled with Purple Loosestrife remains we clumped back to the car, the backs slightly aching and the knees a little tender. Happy to be of service to our river.

Speaking of service, your foundation is considering an eradication event for the summer of 2017. We would like to coordinate with our River Keepers and possibly Huron Pines for this effort and will keep you informed of our plans and how you can help in future newsletters and on our website.

North Branch Brook Trout Restoration - CO 612 to Meade's by Glen Eberly

The 5th year (2017) of Brook Trout Habitat Restoration activity on the Au Sable North Branch, is being planned and will be carried out by Anglers of the Au Sable. The work started in the upper reaches of the North Branch at Dam 2 in Otsego Co. and has moved down stream to the Lovells Bridge, addressing stretches where restoration work could be effective. **The habitat restoration objectives are to provide spawning cover for brook trout, uncover critical gravel for spawning and aquatic insect production and manage sand loads and movement.** The work on the stream to improve brook trout habitat is also beneficial for brown trout.

In July and September, the river stretch from Lovells Bridge, over CO 612, downstream to the Meade property was mapped to identify the river width, trout redd locations, in-stream structures, springs, and islands. Each feature has been marked by GPS coordinates. Over 50 man hours of in stream mapping and map creation has been a cooperative effort by three organizations: Gerry Lake of Mason-Griffith TU Chapter, Terry Lyons, Habitat Chair for Anglers of the Au Sable, Andy Richards, North Branch Habitat Chair for Anglers, Steve Johnson and Glen Eberly of our own ASNBAF. The next step was to walk the stretch with retired fish biologist, Steve Sendek, and mark on the map proposed structures designed to accomplish the habitat objectives noted in the first paragraph. Sendek's company North Point Fish Management is the contractor selected by Anglers which has been implementing the restoration plan. Restoration tools include Para Logs (8 - 12" logs anchored parallel to the current by an auger in the stream-bed and attached by chain), Arrowhead Drift Jams (set at head of an island to collect woody debris and provide trout cover and protection for the island) and Brush Piles (set near banks in slow water to accumulate sand and uncover valuable gravel). These tools have been applied to upstream projects on the North Branch. The structures have been reviewed by the DNR Fisheries Dept. and they are pleased with the results. In all, 114 structures have been planned for CO 612 to Meade's. **Any structures planned on private property require owner's permission. Prior to any work, the property owners will be contacted to explain the work to be done, the expected improvement to the stream and to gain permission to do the proposed work.**

A second reach walk done this past summer was to review proposed structures for Co 612 to Meade's. In all, 114 structures were planned by GPS location. To be proactive and get their input, the walk included governmental agencies (DNR Fisheries Department and the DNR Natural Rivers). The resulting restoration plan was sent to the DEQ and the DNR, Natural Rivers and permits have since been received.

Anglers is currently seeking funding for this phase of the North Branch restoration project. Previous restoration work has been funded through Anglers by HIF (Habitat Improvement Fund) grants, which are administered by the DNR. This funding is provided for projects on the Manistee, Muskegon and AuSable watersheds to improve and enhance fisheries and aquatic resources affected by the Consumer Energy Company's hydro power projects. Due to increased competition for these grant funds and the fact that Anglers has received considerable HIF funding in the past, the grant request for the above phase of work was not approved. This is the 4th Phase of North Branch restoration work and we are hopeful that Anglers can find the necessary funding to continue this important habitat improvement effort.



PHOTO COURTESY OF GLEN EBERLY
ARROWHEAD DRIFT DAM



PHOTO COURTESY OF GLEN EBERLY
PARALOG

Permitting Within Crawford County & Lovells Township

by Gary Neumann, Lovells Township Supervisor

A question that I frequently get asked at the Township Hall is “What kind of permit do I need to build a _____ ?” Unfortunately, there is often no simple or singular answer to this question. However, the following should take some of the mystery out of this topic while providing you with a basic understanding of the permitting process.

Lovells Township exercises zoning authority within the township. This function is the responsibility of our Zoning Administrator, Dale Gauthier Jr. (989-348-7301 or lovellszoning@gmail.com). In accomplishing his duties Dale Jr. follows the Lovells Township Zoning Ordinance (LTZO). Generally speaking, Dale Jr. is the place to start, regardless of the project you have in mind or the location of that project. At times it gets complicated because regulations differ based upon the zoning (Greenbelt, Residential, Commercial, etc.) of the parcel where the project is to be accomplished. Dale Jr. often meets with the parcel owner at the parcel, and once he is satisfied that the project meets the requirements of the LTZO he will issue the parcel owner a zoning permit. The current fee for a zoning permit is \$20. It is an important permit because the county will not issue a building permit for work in Lovells Township unless Dale Jr. has issued a zoning permit for that work.

Crawford County exercises control of building/construction throughout the county. Joe Duran (989-344-3233 or jduran@crawfordco.org) is the county official responsible for this function and his office is in the basement of the county building in Grayling. Joe is the individual who issues building permits, soil and erosion control permits, and he is the building and mechanical inspector for the county. He arranges for the required inspection of all electrical and plumbing work done in the county. Joe keeps a very organized office and he has forms and instructions for essentially any project you might think of. Crawford County permit fees are generally determined by the size of the project, and they will be significantly higher than a Lovells Township zoning permit.

District Health Department 10 (DHD10) exercises control over wells, septic systems and outhouses (yup, they are still legal – more on them later) within Crawford County. DHD10 is located at 501 Norway St. in Grayling and their phone is 989-348-7800. Arriving at DHD10 with a building permit from Joe at Crawford County will, after paying the required fee, get you a permit for a well, a septic system, or both. Again, expect the permit fee to be significantly higher than a Lovells zoning permit. DHD10 personnel will do both a pre-construction site visit for a septic system to perform the required soil boring, and a post-construction, but prior to back fill, inspection to make sure the system was properly installed. Their main concern with wells is the isolation distance of the well from things like a septic tank or drain field, a dry well, or a sewer line. As promised, a few words on out houses. You must also obtain a permit from DHD10 to install one. However, a simple “hole in the ground” with an outhouse over it is not acceptable because the affluent can not come in direct contact with the earth. There must be a capability to pump out the affluent, so most modern out houses are installed over a buried septic tank. And, if you went to all that work, maybe the addition of a drain field wouldn't be a bad idea?

In closing, feel free to call or email Lovells Township if you have questions that are not answered above (989-348-9215 or lovellstownship@gmail.com). We will do our best to point you in the right direction. We are also always happy to provide sections of the LTZO should you desire, for example, to become more familiar with the restrictions in a specific zoning category, such as the Greenbelt Zone.

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

www.ausablenorthbranch.org

Here is my (our) contribution to support the Foundation:

Name: _____ Contribution Amount: _____

Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Please return to:

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation - c/o Marjje Warner - PO Box 2524, Grayling, MI 49738

Au Sable North Branch Foundation is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a 501(c)3 not for profit.

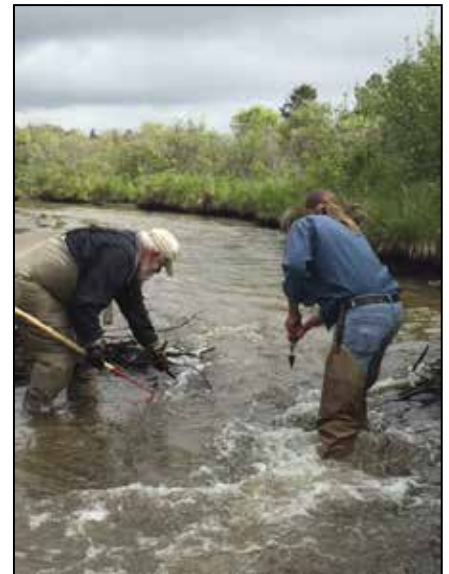
River Keeper Program Update by Eric Bankhead

The 7th year of the North Branch River Keepers Program has come to season close. The Keepers notified us of about 6 tree falls or Large Woody Debris blockages, all remediated by Ken Reed. Ken will be doing our river maintenance next season also. If you do see any issues that would be of a concern over the fall and winter, please report it as we will take care of it weather permitting.

Purple Loosestrife (PLS) seemed to have a bountiful growing season this summer, it was very overwhelming considering that we have had great attacks on it over the last few summers. New plans of attack are being planned for next summer. The Board will be considering holding a couple of volunteer PLS ATTACK DAYS in late July and August 2017 with Beer and Brats afterwards. Also, seeing if we can get Huron Pines Invasive SWAT Team to assist with controlled spraying of large areas on some of the island that have hundreds of PLS plants. A planning meeting with HP will be scheduled for early 2017. Your assistance in Property Owner Permission will be required for spraying by state certified herbicide applicators. Update to follow in Spring Newsletter.

See our website **AuSableNorthBranch.org**, 'River Keeper Program' page for contact information on your Reach.

All river maintenance is paid for by your donations.
Thanks for your concern for the River!



On 6/7/16 under the fearless leadership of board member Steve Johnson, fellow board members Tom Wessels and Mike Inman removed two beaver dams along Big Creek as part of the ongoing restoration project on Big Creek.

Upland Game Birds in The North Branch Watershed by Bob Weed

Ruffed Grouse and Woodcock are two important upland birds in Northern Michigan forests. Whether people chase them with guns or cameras, a thriving population of these birds are indicative of a diverse and healthy environment.

The dappled grayish or reddish Ruffed Grouse is often difficult to see in the wild, the sound and sight of their “drumming” is as much as a sign of spring as opening day of trout season. The grouse has a cocky crest and a tail marked by a broad, dark band near the tip of the tail. Displaying males also have a black ruff of neck feathers which gives them their name. The grouse are not migratory and spend their winters in Michigan feeding primarily on the flower buds of Aspen, Willow and Birch.

The Woodcock, like many Michigan residents, migrates in winter and returns in spring. It is an unusual looking bird. Large eyes are located along the sides of the bird's head, allowing it to see in all directions, including directly behind. A long, thin bill that averages nearly three inches in length permits woodcock to probe in soft earth for worms, slugs and other invertebrates. Nostrils lie high against the skull so the woodcock can feed and breathe at the same time. Its ears are located beneath the eyes. Woodcock stand about eight inches tall, appear to bob when they walk. They are known for their erratic flight patterns and unusual spring displays by the males.



Both grouse and woodcock prefer areas with abundant Aspen and brushy understory. Oaks, dogwoods and hazel also provide important food sources. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) provides abundant information on habitat development and improvement for both species as well as actively managing some state forest land to benefit these important upland birds. Your foundation is talking with the DNR about potential projects within the North Branch watershed where we could participate with both volunteer man-power and some co-funding. We will keep you informed in future newsletters and on our website as plans are developed.

A BIG Thank You toThose Who Support the Foundation!

Bill and Debi Anderson
 Connie Schrieber and Eric Bankhead
 Joseph Burroughs
 Carol and Bruce Carman
 Susan Cooper
 John Dallas
 Gary Dueweke
 Van D. Echler
 Gretchen Ferguson
 Mike and Susan Inman
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 Nicholas Pane and Susan Miller
 Gary Neumann
 Marshall and Nanne Olds
 Bruce Pregler
 Richard and Virginia Reichenbach

Janet and Bill Ross
 Jake Shinnars
 John Sullivan
 Bob Weed



UPCOMING EVENTS

2017 TROUT OPENER

April 29, 2017
 Lovells Township

BOARD MEETINGS

Concluded for 2016
 First Meeting in 2017
 will be the 2nd
 weekend of April

The AuSable North Branch Area Foundation is a Michigan non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation. We embrace all our donors as an integral part of the Foundation's efforts to protect and enhance the North Branch watershed and its environs. Although donors to organizations like ours are not legally considered members, we view our donors in the spirit of membership. As such, our members can experience both the assurance and satisfaction that they are making a meaningful contribution to the protection and health of our precious natural resource. Some of the benefits derived from your membership include: Riverkeeper program, invasive species eradication, maintenance and improvement of river access sites, maintaining an open and navigable river, beaver dam removal, brown trout redd survey, and placement of large woody debris. In addition to these, you also enjoy: tax deductible status for your donations, our bi-annual newsletter, our annual dinner, access to our website, email alerts, opportunities to suggest, volunteer and assist in projects, network with others who share your common interest in our resource, and learn more about the ecosystem of your river and ways to protect it.



PHOTO OF TOM WEZZELL
 COURTESY OF NEIL WALLACE

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

PO Box 2524 • Grayling • MI 49738

Officers

Bob Grant, President
 989-348-7574
 Mike Inman, Vice President
 989-348-2922
 Marjie Warner, Treasurer
 313-663-1331
 George Shaw, Secretary
 989-316-2224
 Glen Eberly, Past President
 989-348-3084

Directors

Debi Anderson 219-242-1900
 Eric Bankhead 989-348-6704
 Bill Duncanson 989-348-9364
 Steve Johnson 989-344-1053
 Gary Neumann 989-348-9848
 Jerry Rucker 989-348-8738
 Neil Wallace 248-891-5446
 Robert Weed 989-348-5793
 Tom Wessels 231-271-6151

Mission Statement: To preserve, protect and enhance the natural endowments of the watershed of the North Branch of the Au Sable River for the benefit of wild fish and game and public enjoyment and appreciation.

