



THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

Fall/Winter 2022

Protecting the North Branch for over 78 Years

Photo by George Safranek

From the Chairman's Desk

Hello. My name is Tom Wessels, and I'm the newly-elected Chair of the Foundation. I've actually been on the Board for several years, but this is my first as an officer. Ordinarily, I enjoy volunteering for the "boots-on-the-ground" projects like electro-shocking trout, counting redds, cleaning up trash, posting signs, etc. We'll have to see how I do in the "Executive Branch".

I'm a recently retired high school science teacher. I spent 18 years in the classroom, and another 20 years doing professional development workshops for other teachers. I have a BS in Biology, and an MS in Environmental Education, both from MSU. My wife Janet and I have been married 41 years as of this fall. Janet is looking forward to retiring from her career as an occupational therapist this winter. We have two adult children, a son and a daughter (our daughter was featured in an article I wrote for a previous newsletter).



While I'm at it, this introduction can serve double duty as my "How I came to the AuSable" story. It all started over 40 years ago when my college roommate and dear friend, Bob Grant (past chair of the ASNBAF), invited me and a couple other buddies up to his grandparents' place on the South Branch for Memorial Day weekend. Between euchre games, Bob taught me how to fly fish (for which I will be forever grateful!) and accompanied me to Roscommon to buy my first fly rod (which I still use occasionally). Over the next several years, we'd come up to the South Branch to fish and hunt grouse and woodcock. After his grandparents' place sold, we spent the next year tent camping in the Mason Tract until Bob was able to purchase his current property on the North Branch. Over the years we got to know Ed and Jean, Bob's next-door neighbors. When Ed passed away, Jean indicated she wanted to sell. So I contacted her, worked out a deal, and the rest is history. That was 20 years ago.

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From the Chairman's Desk (continued from page 1)

When not at our cabin on the North Branch, we live in Suttons Bay, in Leelanau County. In retirement, I've enjoyed gardening and canning vegetables, boiling down maple syrup, playing saxophone in our community band, swimming at the Y, and reading - mostly theology, Civil War history, and the short stories of Gordon MacQuarrie.

I look forward to my term as your chairman, working with such a great group of people. We've accomplished a lot over the years, and will face many significant new challenges in the future.

Update on the Otsego Lake Drain Replacement By Glen Eberly

In the 1960's a developer received approval from Otsego County to fill in the low lands at the south end of Otsego Lake to build homes along the newly created shoreline, which appears to be the historic outlet of Otsego Lake. Then, heavy rains and snow runoff in the spring of 1971 resulted in Otsego Lake reaching a record high. Governor Milliken declared a State of Emergency due to heavy property damage and potential health hazard from septic system flooding. This enabled the county to have the Army Corps of Engineers develop an engineering plan to lower the level of Otsego Lake.

A 7,000 foot drain (4,000 ft. tiled pipe underground and 3,000 ft. open trench) was built to allow draining of lake water which flowed east into the Au Sable North Branch. The court also set a maximum drainage flow rate of 15 cubic feet per second (cfs) and permitted drawdown only from Sept.1 to June 15th. The project was completed in 1972 with three large drainage tubes set in the lake allowing water drawdown through the pipe to the North Branch. A wheel operated valve located about 100 feet from the eastern shore controlled the flow. The valve is capable of a flow of 80 cfs.

Sometime in the spring of 1976 there was a huge water release. This release caused silt from upstream beaver ponds to flow down the North Branch resulting in a major fish kill, witnessed by Gerry Lake and Chuck Wheeler, a past president of our organization. A law suit was filed but oddly the case is sealed barring access.

After years of ice damage, the three drain pipes are in bad shape and Otsego County is in the process of replacement. A committee of Bill Anderson, Tom Wessels and Glen Eberly have been working with Tom Marquard, Director of Planning to be sure the drain replacement is in compliance with the court ordered maximum 15 cfs drawdown, providing protection for the North Branch. In a Sept.1st meeting we learned that Otsego County plans to change the drain from the pipe system to a weir dam like system at the shoreline, for which they can get funding. This change will eliminate the pipes in the lake. The plan is to only change the system from the lake to the control valve and the existing valve will not be changed. Tom assured us that the maximum flow of 15 cfs will not be exceeded by the road commission, who controls the valve.

Marquard was very interested in the history of the developer filling in the southern end of the lake shoreline. He is aware that the 4,000 feet of pipe to the trench is aging and will eventually require replacement at an astronomical cost. And he wants to research changing the discharge location to the south end of the lake which would be far less expensive than replacing 4,000 feet of piping. There is a culvert at the south end and he believes that the south end was the natural outlet.

This change of outlet was a long shot objective of our committee in 2018 when a drain replacement was first discussed. We will keep you advised of the progress of the Otsego Lake Drain Replacement.



Otsego Lake Drain Intake



Drain pipe outlet to North Branch

2022 Photo Contest Winners

The votes are in. The winners of this year's photo contest are:

Scenery - Rick Miller of Leonidas, MI

Wildlife - Kathy Lareau of Lovells, MI

Youth - Sophia Mangona

Congratulations to each winner for their outstanding photographs. They were each awarded a \$100 gift certificate to Gates' Au Sable Lodge. We would also like to thank all those folks who sent in their entries. Many of your photos will be shown in our future newsletters, so please keep them coming.

It is now time for all our readers to start snapping away in preparation for our 2023 contest. We hope many more will join in the fun this coming year. Take your best shots and submit them to Northbranchphotos@gmail.com. Limit submissions to no more than two photos per category. Please check our web site for contest rules and to see all the entries for 2022.



Scenery Winner - Rick Miller



Wildlife Winner - Kathy Lareau



Youth Winner - Sophia Mangona

Neumann's Landing

Hopefully you have had the chance to see and use the new access site in Lovells, Neumann's Landing. Construction was completed earlier this year and it was dedicated during Trout Opener Weekend. Your foundation provided funding to install a bench in memory of **Jim Knox**, overlooking the access site. This facility is definitely an asset to the community and all who enjoy the river. Access has been provided for people with limited mobility and the new roller ramps make launching your canoe or kayak much easier.



New boat launch and landing on east side of river (photo by Gary Neumann)

River Etiquette Signs Installed on North Branch

The Foundation partnered with Au Sable River Property Owners Association (ARPOA) to provide information and education to people enjoying the river. ARPOA developed the design and acquired permits; we provided funding and manpower for the installation of River Etiquette signs at major access points on the North Branch.

On October 14, Howard Johnson, from ARPOA, brought all the tools and materials while volunteers from ARPOA and ASNBAF provided the manpower. Signs were installed at Sheep Meadow, Copper Fisherman, Neumann's Landing (Lovells), Dam 4 and Morley Road. We are confident these signs will help remind people to enjoy the river responsibly.



Foundation board members Steve Johnson and John Porteous admire the new sign they installed at Neumann's Landing.

We appreciate your tax deductible donations that make our work possible. We can also accept credit card donations on the web site. Please use the form below to help us maintain and improve our North Branch

Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

www.ausablenorthbranch.org

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

Name: _____

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In Memory/Honor of: _____

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

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

2022 Donors

Thank you to all our donors listed below and on page 6. It is your support that makes it possible for us to undertake the important projects that benefit our river and those who enjoy it!

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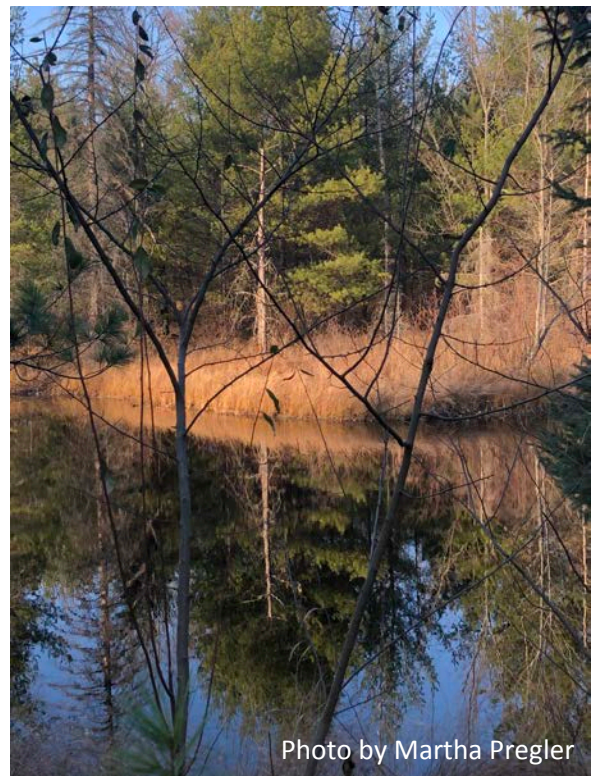


Photo by Martha Pregler

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Karen Turner, in memory of Keith Traver
John and Sue Walters, in honor of Eric Bankhead, Glen Eberly,
Gary Neumann, John Porteous
Jim and Ida Wine, in memory of Bill Ross



Photo by Ken Gribble

Purple Loosestrife Removal Program by Bill Anderson

On August 16 and 17, six volunteers along with staff from Huron Pines killed Purple Loosestrife or removed blossoms from the plants from the Lovells 612 bridge to almost the Mainstream and North Branch confluence. There were not as many plants located as last year so our efforts to control the spread of this invasive plant have been somewhat successful.

Individuals from Huron Pines who had been trained in the application of a herbicide swiped the PLS plants on the properties where we had written permission to do so. On the properties where we did not have permission, we could only remove the flower and seeds and in rare cases pull the plant out by the roots. However, anything less than applying an herbicide allows the plant to reappear next year.

We hope to pursue this procedure again next August and would like to thank Huron Pines staff and all of the volunteers who assisted us in this two-day blitz. The volunteers were: Jeff Traver, Lee Bender, Larry Warner, George Shaw, Mike Inman and Bill Anderson.

If you see Purple Loosestrife on your property, at a minimum please remove the blossoms and dispose of them in a fire pit or your garbage. This will at least eliminate the spread of seeds downstream to blossom into new plants next season.

Officers

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Steve Johnson 989-344-8766
Gary Neumann 989-348-9848
John Porteous 317-403-2891

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.

