



# THE NORTH BRANCH

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE AU SABLE NORTH BRANCH AREA FOUNDATION

Fall/Winter 2018

## *Celebrating 75 years of protecting the North Branch!*

### From the President's Desk

Salutations Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation Members,  
Allow me to introduce myself. My name is Mike Inman and I am your newly elected ASNBAF Chairman. I joined the board 4 years ago. My wife Sue and I have owned a cabin on the North Branch down river from the confluence of Big Creek since 2003. I was initially introduced to the area in the 1950's by my father and his mom and dad who owned a cabin just down river from Lovells Bridge. I remember well wading hand in hand in the river with my grandma in our tennis shoes. I was always a little confused as to why I was allowed to get my shoes wet! It was a busy year for the Foundation. The following is a list of some of your foundation's projects:

1. Continuation of our River Keeper's program. Volunteers floating assigned river reaches monitoring and reporting any problems such as river obstructions.
2. Wild Life Enhancement Project. In September foundation volunteers joined with the DNR, Michigan United Conservation Clubs and the National Wild Turkey Association to help finance and plant fruit trees in our watershed wild life areas.
3. Honey Bee Hive. Financed and installed a honey bee hive in Lovells to encourage pollination of area flowers, vegetables and fruit blooms.
4. Provided funding to the Cedar of the Au Sable program.
5. Reviewed our existing watershed plan, formed a committee and began bank erosion identification and remediation training.
6. Supported Anglers of the Au Sable NB river trout habitat restoration project now in its 6th year.
7. Provided written objections to proposed Camp Grayling Joint Land Use Survey

I'd like to thank out going board members Bob Grant, George Shaw and Debbie Anderson for their service to the foundation. I'd also like to welcome Neil Wallace as our new VP, Bob Weed as our new Secretary and welcome our new board member Bill Anderson.

As the new chairman, I feel a tremendous responsibility to continue the good work of your foundation as we begin our 76th year. I will need your help. Please reach out to me or any of your board members regarding any issues, ideas or projects at [minman1104@gmail.com](mailto:minman1104@gmail.com).

All the best to you,  
Mike Inman



## Foundation Partners with Huron Pines to stop Erosion

by Neil Wallace

Recently a group of ANBAF volunteers met with John Bailey of Huron Pines, to learn to identify, classify, measure, and prioritize erosion sites on our North Branch.

Excessive sediment was identified as the major concern in our North Branch Au Sable River Watershed Action Plan, 2009. Severe erosion is certainly a problem for river side property owners, but it also is harmful to the River. The sediment added to the river adversely impacts the insects and fish directly and indirectly affects the wildlife that depend on the insects and fish for food. Some erosion is caused by the manner in which property owners develop and manage their riverfront and some erosion is the result of natural forces, although perhaps accelerated by human control of the river, such as clearing trees that block river passage.



Our initial training began with a classroom-like session on identifying sites and using Huron Pines' "Streambank Erosion Severity Index" form. Then it was off to the river for hands-on learning by doing.

We did three sites in the Red Dog area. The lower river offered the sort of obvious erosion that even we beginners could spot. Two of the sites were quite near one another, but much different in character. Everyone participated in measuring height, length, slope ratio and river width and depth. We rated soil composition, vegetation coverage and likely causes of the erosion. John Bailey even detailed the remediation techniques he would recommend for each of the different sites. The final step was to score all this information to determine the erosion severity of each site. Two rated severe, the other was just two points shy of that rating.

Afterwards we met to discuss next steps. In October we will do more initial assessments covering Kellogg Bridge to the confluence. Our plan is to record GPS coordinates of these erosion sites, photograph them and complete a Severity Index form for each. We will re-assess these sites each year until we are able to raise the necessary funds and work with property owners to do remediations. Also this winter, we will check in on these initial sites to determine the impacts of ice and high water flow and we will begin identifying other erosion sites in the North Branch and Big Creek.

We also learned there are steps property owners can take to prevent or reduce that type of erosion caused or exacerbated by how the property is managed.



One recommendation is to discontinue mowing along a 6-8 foot wide strip of the bluff closest to the river, to create a "buffer zone". This will allow rainwater to soak into the soil and prevent runoff washing down the bluff. Then it will further help to plant a mixture of wildflowers in the buffer zone, for example the Pollinator Seed Mix Packet available online at [www.michiganwildflower.com](http://www.michiganwildflower.com). There are other grasses and bushes that will also have the root structure to help stabilize and hold the bank.

Thanks to our volunteers: Tom Wessels, Bill Anderson, Mike Inman, and Terry Lyons.

### *Editor's Note:*

Some of our members floated from Kellogg Bridge to the confluence with the main stream on October 13. A report on what they found will be posted on our web site during November.



## Passing on the Legacy by Tom Wessels

"That's a pretty nice little cast she's got there." The man speaking was none other than Bob Summers, the premier bamboo fly rod builder. Our teenage daughter Dana, the object of Mr. Summers' compliment, and I were attending the Grand Opening of the Boardman River Nature Center in Traverse City. Bob had graciously donated one of his rods to be raffled off as a fundraiser. As Dana and I walked through the yard and approached his table, he asked her if she fished, and she tentatively said "yes." Before I knew it, he handed her his masterpiece and said, "Here, young lady, try it out!" I was more than a little nervous as she stood there and waved that bamboo rod (worth more money than all my fishing gear combined and then some!). As we walked away, I tried to explain just how special an experience she'd just had. Dana seemed unimpressed. But then, teenage daughters are often unimpressed with things their fathers say.

Two great rewards in the lives of parents are seeing our kids grow to share a passion for the outdoors, and watching them out-pace our own academic and professional accomplishments. It's a rare thing. But, I've been doubly blessed to be able to witness both.

Dana has enjoyed fly fishing with her old man ever since we got our cabin on the North Branch fifteen years ago. I like nothing better than accompanying her to the river, watching her smoothly cast a fly, waiting through the drift, seeing that little explosion of water and hearing her shout "Ha!" as her rod bends and bobs. Through the years, she's become more adept at casting, releasing a fish, and even tying a few of her own flies. She and I enjoy seeing deer wade across the river, mink scamper along the bank, or an eagle gliding downstream overhead. And Dana shares her dad's opinion that there's simply no prettier fish than an autumn brook trout.

Fast forward ten years. My wife Janet and I are attending our daughter's dissertation defense on the campus of Grand Valley State University. Dana is earning her Master of Science degree having studied the environmental impact of trout farms on streams in the cloud forests of Ecuador. (More than a little ironic, given the issues we're currently facing here on the Au Sable.) We could not be more proud of her! Nowadays, when we share an evening fish, Dana can rattle off the Latin names of the bugs she finds clinging to her waders.

All of us who are concerned with the health and conservation of our natural resources know that unless that concern is passed along to those of future generations, all our efforts and accomplishments are merely ephemeral. I take great satisfaction in knowing that eventually when I'm gone, there will still be someone here, dedicated and diligent, to carry on that tradition.



Dana and Tom, 2008



Dana and Tom, 2018



**Editor's Note:** We are looking for more personal interest stories for the newsletter and web site. If you have a story about how, when or why you were attracted to the North Branch, please share with us at [Northbranchphotos@gmail.com](mailto:Northbranchphotos@gmail.com)

## Wildlife Habitat Enhancement Project by Michael Inman

On September 8, 2018 ASNBAF partnered with the DNR, National Wild Turkey Federation and Michigan United Conservation Clubs (MUCC) to plant over 100 fruit bearing trees in the Lovells, Michigan area as part of an ongoing effort to rehabilitate land for the benefit of wildlife.

Your foundation's donation of \$2,500.00 to the project purchased 25 of the 100 plus trees planted at the perimeters of cleared wildlife areas. Four members of the foundation participated in the planting. MUCC volunteers provided a tasty lunch.

It was a "get your hands dirty" project but it was rewarding to step back and literally see the fruits of our labor hanging from the twelve-foot tall trees that were planted. With a little assistance from mother nature these sites should bring numerous birds, grouse, turkey, woodcock and deer in for a meal for their benefit and for the enjoyment of wild life observers and hunters. Thanks to everyone for your donations which allowed us to participate in this project.



We hope this newsletter is both interesting and informative for you, and have made a number of changes in an effort to improve it. We are also working hard to improve our web site and encourage you to visit it for additional information, articles and photos. However, we are always happy to hear from you. If you have any articles, ideas, comments or suggestions, please send them to Bob Weed: robertweed70@yahoo.com

**We appreciate the donations that make our work possible. We can now accept donations by credit cards and Pay Pal on the web site. Please consider using our web site, or the form below to help us maintain and improve our North Branch**

## Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation

www.ausablenorthbranch.org

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

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## NB Trout Population Study

by Michael Inman and Glen Eberly



On October 17, 2018 the Upper Au Sable Fisheries Work Group convened at the DNR conference center in Gaylord to discuss reports, made by fishing guides this past spring, of poor brook trout fishing on the North Branch. Based on those reports and other anecdotal evidence, a coalition of concerned groups (Anglers of the Au Sable, ASNBAF, Michigan TU, Au Sable Property Owners Association, DNR, DEQ, Gates Lodge representatives, biologists and other scientists) met in May to discuss the issue, identify potential causes and determine a future course of action. A list of concerns/suggestions was compiled and submitted to the DNR/DEQ for consideration and response.

May and June fish shocking studies confirmed decreased numbers of trout. Dam Four site shocking did reveal a good sampling of 2"- 3" fish. June invertebrate studies performed at three sites revealed "Acceptable to Excellent" results. Water chemistry studies and sediment sampling revealed no abnormalities. Questions concerning the sand loads and possible impact on invertebrate populations in the river were raised and additional studies were recommended. Density and bio-mass studies revealed mixed results with some sites showing decreased fish density and all sites showing decreased fish bio-mass. We are awaiting the results from tests that were done for possible pollutants in the river. ASNBAF has provided funding for all of these studies

There is at a minimum anecdotal evidence and some testing results pointing to a decreased brook trout population in the North Branch. Causation is the big unknown. Follow up meetings are to be scheduled to monitor the situation and to chart a future course of action as is necessary. ASNBAF will be participating in the continued investigations. We will be updating you on the situation on our web site and in our newsletters. We invite all of you to let us know your observations, experiences, thoughts and recommendations; please share them with any of the directors, or email to: [northbranchphotos@gmail.com](mailto:northbranchphotos@gmail.com)



## 2019 Photo Contest:

We will be holding a photo contest next year and awarding prizes for the best photos in two categories: Adult and Youth. Please watch our web site for details, which will be announced in January.

## A BIG Thank You to Our 2018 Supporters!

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### Special Donations

Glen and Martha Eberly, in honor of George Shaw's service  
Jim Knox, in memory of Margaret Eamen Knox  
Mike and Sue Inman, in honor of George Shaw  
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Janet Ross, in memory of Bill Ross  
Keith Traver, in memory of Peggy Traver  
Larry and Marjie Warner, in honor of George Shaw  
Chuck and Janice Wheeler-in memory of Wendy Petherick

### UPCOMING EVENTS

#### North Branch Au Sable 2019 Trout Opener

April 27 Lovells

### Officers

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Neil Wallace, Vice Chairman  
248-891-5446  
Marjie Warner, Treasurer  
313-663-1331  
Bob Weed, Secretary  
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Steve Johnson	989-344-1053
Gary Neumann	989-348-9848
Jerry Rucker	989-348-8738
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.

