



**Mason – Griffith Founders Chapter
Trout Unlimited
February 2022 – Newsletter**

President’s Message – Karen Harrison

Every year when I go to write this message, I wonder what we did in the last year, and every year I plan to keep a running log. That does not seem to happen. 2021 seemed like a lost year! No Annual Meeting, no Banquet, a very successful “Fishing and Hunting Garage Sale”, being honored with the MITU Chapter of the Year award for 2020, planning and receiving the EGLE permit for habitat work on the East Branch Au Sable below the fish hatchery, planting and maintaining cedar trees, conducting insect surveys in the spring, all the while trying to keep the safety of any volunteers the main concern. Not bad!

Our main project for 2022 will be the habitat work below the Fish Hatchery on the E. Branch of the Au Sable. The EGLE Permit is in place, property owner’s endorsement of the project and we have applied for a grant. All plans are in place. This fits nicely with the efforts being put forth by MITU and Anglers of the Au Sable to evaluate and put plans in place to open up the E. Branch with a bypass of the fish hatchery. This would open up about 24 miles of the E. Branch for fish passage. More as plans progress.

Habitat Improvement Projects – Steve Sendek

East Branch Restoration below the Fish Hatchery

2021 was a rather lean year for accomplishments for MGFTU. The Covid pandemic certainly did not help in allowing organized group outings, but our other nemesis was our inability to get our required permits from our State Government, Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE), in a timely manner. The East Branch Au Sable habitat restoration project was on our agenda for the stream crew to work on this past summer. We had received all the landowner permissions (City of Grayling, Crawford County, Crawford AuSable Schools and Munson Health Care) and submitted the State of Michigan, EGLE’s Inland Lakes and Streams permit application in April but did not receive an approved permit until the end of August, after the work crew was finished for the summer as most of the crew had returned to school. We had hoped to have the project completed by August. The governmental permitting process is becoming a systemic problem for us in conducting our restoration work on the rivers. Both EGLE and DNR Natural Rivers permits are now requiring extensive detail in the plans, lengthy Public Review periods and EGLE is now requiring a \$500 fee for any permit application that includes “Fish Habitat Restoration”. In the past permit fees were \$50 or \$100. If this trend continues with the agencies, we may be losing more habitat than we can restore. We, as an organization, need to work on changing these agency obstructions.

For the upcoming year 2022 the river crew will complete the East Branch stream habitat restoration project below the Grayling Hatchery. Before this construction begins, we need to conduct a trout population estimate (stream shocking) and bug survey as pre data for the project. We will be looking for a few volunteers to help out.

Sand Trap Maintenance

Fortunately, not all was lost for the work season as we were able to clean out the sand trap on the upper mainstream on Au Sable Trail. M&M Excavation in Waters went way out of their way to help out on the project sending an excavator, front end loader and a team of dump trucks. They did an excellent job of cleaning the trap in less than a day.

Beaver Management



We were able to have a couple of crews of chapter volunteers remove 3 beaver dams in the AuSable system, one on the upper mainstream off AuSable Trail, one on the Middle Branch of Big Creek and one on the West Branch of Big Creek.

Grayling to Burton's Project Planning

In addition, we hope to begin planning new stream habitat restoration work on the mainstream from Grayling downstream to Burton's Landing. This has been a reach that has been long neglected and needs some TLC.

There are a few new beaver dams that will need to be removed, so watch for the emails requesting volunteers for these projects.

To all, a huge thank you for helping this year (sweat, donations and support) as we keep moving forward for the waters we so enjoy and love.

Habitat Improvement Projects – Manistee River – Jim Anderson

The Upper Manistee River Association (UMRA) had a productive 2021. The culmination of the 2018 HIA grant was finally completed with the construction of 15 fish habitat sites. The 2018 HIA project covered a large area downstream from the Tree Farm to Yellow Trees landing. A total of 26 sites were either refurbished or newly constructed during the multi-year project.

Fortunately, the 2018 HIA project came in under budget. UMRA will be partnering with Michigan Trout Unlimited during the summer of 2022 to conduct more work in the Upper Manistee with the remaining grant money. The work will consist of inventorying the amount of wood in a reach of the Upper as well as an inventory of previous DNR habitat construction sites. The wood inventory will be conducted in a stretch where the most wood currently exists as well as a stretch without much wood. That data will be compared for functional reference which will give UMRA a better understanding of where future woody habitat work will be needed. There were many DNR habitat sites constructed during the 1950s and 70s. Most of those sites remain in some form. Each of the previously constructed sites will be GPS, photo'd and a description of their condition recorded. All this survey work will provide UMRA where the future fish habitat needs are and a rationale for future grant proposals.

In addition, UMRA is discussing some project work outside the banks of the river. The Upper Manistee Campground needs some cosmetic and functional work. UMRA is talking with the DNR Parks and Recs division about a partnership to address those issues. And finally, the launch sites at CCC bridge and the Tree Farm have been on the DNR docket for several years to shorten and landscape. Hopefully that will happen during 2022. UMRA will continue providing porta johns at 8 different locations along the Upper Manistee River for all river users to use.

Volunteer Projects – Bob Andrus

2022 Activities

The Chapter's volunteer river projects for 2022 will include beaver dam removals on West Branch of Big Creek and on Kolka Creek near Frederic. In early May we'll conduct four insect surveys. Two surveys will be on the Manistee River where the Upper Manistee River Association will be conducting stream restoration. A third site will be on the Au Sable's East Branch downstream of the Grayling Fish

Hatchery where Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter will be making improvements in the Kid's Fishing Section. The fourth site is yet to be determined.

In mid-May Chapter volunteers will return to the Upper Manistee's Deward Tract to complete the Cedar Cage Replacement project. In past years Chapter volunteer planted and caged two hundred and fifty cedar trees at five different project sites and since then has been systematically replacing the smaller cages with larger ones.

In July volunteers will be working with the Chapter's Summer River Crew in the Kid's Fishing Section on the Au Sable's East Branch located downstream of the Fish Hatchery. We'll finish the year in early November when we conduct the Au Sable River Brown Trout Redd Survey.

2021 Accomplishments



In 2021 we were able to conduct an oak seedling planting project for the Michigan Trout Unlimited Property Management Board on the Knight Tract near Wakeley Bridge. Nine volunteers spent two days replacing protective mesh tubes on nearly 300 oak seedlings. In early May volunteers conducted insect surveys at three of the Chapter's long-term monitoring sites. In mid-May volunteers returned to the Williams Tract on the Au Sable to plant and cage fifty Cedar seedlings.

The planting completed our five -year cedar planting project in the Williams Tract.

In late May volunteers removed beaver dams on the lower reach of the East Branch of the Au Sable and on the West Branch of Big Creek.

In October the Chapter replaced fifty cedar cages along the Manistee River in the Deward Tract. In early November, the Au Sable River brown trout surveys were completed on nearly twenty miles of the Au Sable's Main Stream and South Branch.

Over fifty different volunteers completed over 500 volunteer hours on Chapter volunteer projects in 2021. The Au Sable and Manistee River watersheds have benefited immensely from their efforts. If you would like to become a part of this Chapter effort contact Bob Andrus at randrus45@gmail.com



Mio Downstream – Thomas Buhr

During the summer of 2021 cedar trees were planted along the banks of the Au Sable downstream from Mio.

A new angler survey for 2022 will be implemented. The number of participants will be increased from the last survey (2021) and will be selected from a group of volunteers. Requirements for participation are:

1. Must possess an All Species fishing license.
2. Must fish at least 10 days on the designated waters.
3. Cannot be a licensed fishing guide.
4. Recorded forms to be turned in on a monthly basis.

If you wish to be considered for the survey, contact Thomas Buhr by e-mail at tombuhr@prodigy.net

Au Sable Climate Resilience Project

Several of MGFTU's members, as well as local individuals representing other conservation organizations, were invited to participate in a group led by MSU and Michigan DNR. The project, which started in September, is to use structured decision making to ensure resilience of the Au Sable and the fish community in the face of ecological changes.

The project, funded by Michigan DNR, is a collaboration between MSU, biologists and managers from MDNR. The goal is to hold a series of "structured decision making" workshops with stakeholders (TU, Anglers, ASNBAF among others) to understand the different values and objectives that people have for the Au Sable River, its fish community, and the potential effects of climate change. It is planned to focus on the Au Sable River itself, as well as its watershed. In this decision-making process, stakeholder objectives will be used to determine actions that could be taken to enhance the Au Sable's resilience to stressors such as climate change. Different modeling and data collection methods will be considered to predict how well these actions would perform at achieving stakeholder goals. The group will recommend decisions about how to move forward.

The hope is that the recommendation of this group will be relevant to other rivers in the state.

Youth Activities – Jim Wilkinson

While Covid has curtailed most of the youth activities, we did have a Middle School fishing event at the Fish Hatchery in September and another event in November. While Middle School fly tying was all set to proceed this year, it was cancelled as an after-school activity because of Covid. Brad Wagner, a middle school instructor, is having fly tying as part of his outdoor recreation class.

Adult Winter Fly tying

While we were all set to have adult fly tying this winter at the Free Methodist Church, it was, again, cancelled due to Covid.

Annual Meeting

Our Annual Meeting was once again cancelled for this winter. Kirtland Community College was not booking events or catering. We will be giving out awards again this year, just not in person.

Michigan Fly Fishing Club Expo

Because of the continued escalation of COVID, Mason-Griffith has elected to not have a booth at this event year scheduled for March 12th and 13th at Macomb Community College in Warren

Awards

Every year we take nominations for our annual awards. This year's winners are:

Brook Trout Award - Barb and Gary Vetter - For their huge contribution in making our summer "Fishing and Hunting Garage Sale" a success. They helped to gather donations, stored, sorted and priced donations, then hauled everything to Grayling for the sale! This was a two-day sale held at the pavilion at the Grayling Park. It had to be torn down after day one and set up for day two. There is also a huge thanks to all that assisted. This

Brown Trout Award - Gary Neumann, Lovells Township Supervisor - For his perseverance and dedication to facilitate the North Branch River Access on CR 612. This access provides a ramp and ample off-road parking where river access was always difficult and off-road parking dangerous.

MGFTU Chapter of the Year – 2020

MGFTU received the MITU Chapter of the Year award for their work in 2020 at the MITU Quarterly meeting in September 2021. All of you made this happen!



Left to right, Board members or advisors: Boyd Dillon, Bob Andrus, Mark Hendricks, Karen Harrison, Thomas Buhr, Glen Eberly, Brandy Solak and Steve Johnson

Awards Given to MGFTU Members

Riverkeeper Award – Bob Andrus was presented the Riverkeeper Award by Anglers of the Au Sable at river clean-up in September 2021. Bob has been a long-term advocate, supporter and leader in all things on the Au Sable, and a most valuable member of the Mason-Griffith Chapter. He coordinates all our volunteer projects is a great history source and friend.

Petoskey Award – Karen Harrison was presented with the Petoskey Award by the Michigan Environmental Council in August 2021. This award is for environmental leadership. There were two exceptional leaders on the Au Sable watershed that received this award before Karen: Rusty Gates in 2009 and Bob Andrus in 2013. When contacted Karen stated: "I can't really believe that the BOD did this without me knowing, the seldom can keep secrets from me. I am deeply humbled and honored to even be nominated for this award, let alone receive the award." For more information go to this website: <https://www.environmentalcouncil.org/awards>

Remembering Gerry Lake



Steve Sendek - I first met Gerry in the fall of 1979 when I became part of the DNR's shocking crew on the North Branch Au Sable. He would take vacation from his job with General Motors in Flint to travel up to his cabin on the North Branch at Twin Bridges to observe the annual DNR trout shocking survey. He may have been small in stature, but he was huge in presence, a student and historian of the river. I don't believe there was ever any literature or research that he had not read or archived related to these infamous waters including the logging era of the late 1800's, Dr. Carl Hubb's fish surveys in the 1920's, The CCC stream habitat restoration in the 1930's and the Michigan Department of Conservation (DNR) long term trout population data from the 1950's and forward and Dr. Leonard's bug surveys in the 1960's. He was a "steward" of the river over the decades having fished trout in it from childhood, being part of the litigation to halt the unregulated dumping of water from Otsego Lake, instituting and conducting annual brown trout spawning surveys, trapping 100's of nuisance beaver and removal of their problematic dams, tracking radio tagged brown trout and most recently GPS mapping

instream habitat and assisting crews in restoring instream habitat.

He was a friend to all trout fishermen (at least to those who followed the rules) having spent 1,000's of hours sitting on the bench on Twin Bridges critiquing their fly casting or hinting where the monster 30-inch brown trout was hiding that day.

His presence will be sadly missed but I am truly blessed to have called him my friend. I can honestly say he was a true "Champion of the river" having dedicated every ounce of his existence understanding, protecting, and bettering the North Branch. God's speed Gerry on your journey to a new river in Heaven that is flowing cold, clear, and clean with prolific fly hatches and an endless trout population. You have earned your place on its banks.

Karen Harrison - Lunker structure at Pollock Bridge and sharp pencils; West Branch of Big Creek, kidnapping and generosity; North Branch, educator and redd surveys; long term historian, observant and focused; tenacious; generous; helpful; friend and unread emails. A smile will be elicited from some for a few of these. There was never a more genuine, generous and dedicated friend of the river.

Boyd and Shirley Dillon - Shirley and I went to lunch with Gerry after a meeting. We were ready to order our meals, but Gerry was too busy talking about the river to order. When we had finally ordered our meals, Gerry continued to talk about the river and the problems as he saw them. Our salads came and as we ate Gerry continued to talk about the river. Our meals came and as we ate Gerry pushed his meal aside and kept up with his feelings about the river. The waitress came and asked Gerry if there was something wrong with his meal. Gerry replied there was nothing wrong. She came back a short time later and asked Gerry the same question. Gerry again replied that there was nothing wrong with the meal and that he was too busy talking about the river to eat and could she just box the whole thing up so he could eat it later. Gerry's love of the river pushed everything aside. He also bought that day!

James Renn - Gerry was an enthusiastic and generous presence in this world. He was a cheerful participant at many of my archaeological presentations. He always had wonderful stories and thoughts to share and was a wealth of information about the area and its history. I will miss him and his cheerful face in the audience.

Steve Johnson - I met Gerry in the fall of 2011 while wading near the powerline access on the North Branch. He had ropes strung across the river and had a pram full of tools floating nearby. I inquired

what it was that he was doing and got an hour-long explanation involving river mapping, history of the North Branch, river ecology, beaver trapping, bowling, fly tying and the dangers facing the river's future. I told him that I might have a few ideas about simplifying his mapping process and we started a friendship on the spot.

Board Elections

This year we have the following BOD members up for re-election: **Mark Hendricks, Steve Johnson, Nick Sendek and David Smith**. If there are any comments, suggestions or objections to these Board Members' renewal, please send an email to: wwgcp@frontier.com or a note via mail to: MGFTU, P.O. Box 502, Grayling, MI 49738 by 15 March 2022.

New BOD Member - With the passing of Gerry Lake, MGFTU had a board opening. The BOD elected Brandy Solak to fill the opening which expires in 2023. Brandy has been working with us for a little over a year and has been an eager volunteer. She helped with the Go Fund Me fundraiser (see below) and the "Garage Sale" this past summer. Please welcome Brandy to the MGFTU Board of Directors!

Here is a short bio for Brandy:

Brandy joined Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited (MGFTU) in 2020. She will serve on the Board of Directors as the Social Committee Chair beginning in 2022 and looks forward to helping with fundraising, community outreach, and planned restoration projects. She moved from Gaylord Michigan to the North Branch of the Au Sable River with her husband in 2019 and joined MGFTU as a way to give back to the community and help with river preservation efforts.

Brandy has enjoyed fishing since a very early age with her father and picked up fly fishing while attending college at Michigan Technological University. Since then, she has attended fly fishing classes at Gates Lodge, ties some of her own flies, and seeks out new fishing destinations with her husband as often as possible.

Brandy enjoys many other hobbies including cooking, biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, and yoga.

Fund Raising - A "Go Fund Me" program was opened to support future MGFTU restoration projects. It is now up and running. Thanks to Jim Wilkinson, James Renn, Brandy Solak and Nick Sendek for getting this going. Here is the link if you have not seen it already: <https://gofundme.com/f/trout-unlimited-restoration-effort>

Donations can also be made with a check sent to: MGFTU, P.O. Box 502, Grayling, MI 49738. Our website: www.masongriffithtu.org has a link where an online donation can be made via credit card. There is a comment box near the end of the donation process to designate any preferences or limitations.

Donations received in 2021 - Michael Albrecht, Au Sable River Property Owners Association, Tom Brookover, Ken Buchler, Karen Harrison, John Lindsey, Paul Mesack, Bruce Patrick, Recreation Fishing Club, Ralph Ruchinski, V. Carl Shaner, Mike Swantek, Upper Manistee River Association, Neil Wallace, the Trout Guerillas and everyone who donated items to the Fishing and Hunting Garage Sale.

Donations in Memory of Gerry Lake - Val and Mark Hendricks, Karen Harrison and Barb and Gary Vetter.

Other ways to Assist MGFTU

1. Buy on Smile Amazon and designate Mason-Griffith as your non-profit of choice
2. Look into matching funds from an employer
3. Send suggestions/comments to: wwgcp@frontier.com
4. Volunteer to assist (think of your talents, or what you would like to know and assist with)

Contributors to the Newsletter: Jim Anderson, Bob Andrus, Tom Buhr, Steve Johnson, Karen Harrison, Steve Sendek, Jim Wilkinson

Newsletter Editor: Steve Johnson

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Karen Harrison – President	Jim Anderson	Bob Andrus
Boyd Dillon – Vice President	Steve Johnson	Thomas Buhr
Gary Vetter – Treasurer	Mark Rais	Richard Buss
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	Nick Sendek	Howard N. Johnson
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	Brandy Solak	Bruce Patrick
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