**Presidents Message – Karen Harrison**

I am sitting here on a gloomy December day! Clouds, rain and soon to have the temperature plunge and freeze the world again. A good day for reflection on what great has happened this year and what to look forward to in 2020.

One of the most awarding things for me is our youth program. This started slow, as most new programs do, but is now going strong. You will find elsewhere in this newsletter the essays from Brett Wheeler, the young man we sent to the MITU Youth Camp this year. We sent Brett’s older sister, Brooke, to the MITU youth camp in 2018. She was a junior consular in 2019 and will be again in 2020. The Grayling Middle School Fishing Club is meeting, and designing shirts for the Fishing Club and Fly Tying. MGFTU will have the chosen designs printed on the shirts for these youth. Another activity with our youth is Trout in the Classroom. See the message about the Trout in the Classroom elsewhere in this newsletter.

The results of the USGS Chemical Survey conducted on the NB of the Au Sable will be available by the end of the year. Short story, there were chemicals detected, some at every point evaluated, and the greatest number of chemicals were found at Kellogg Bridge. The chemical levels were not significant but actually set a base level for the time and place.

Have you checked out the new USGS Gage on the NB at Kellogg Bridge. Here is the link:

https://waterdata.usgs.gov/mi/nwis/uv?cb_all_=on&cb_00010=on&cb_00065=on&format=gif_default&site_no=04135800&period=&begin_date=2019-12-02&end_date=2019-12-09

This will be funded by partners: Au Sable North Branch Area Foundation, Anglers of the Au Sable, Au Sable Property Owners Association and MGFTU along with private donors. The intent is to have this in place for at least 3 years. MGFTU has applied for a Fisheries Habitat Grant to assist with the 3-year maintenance and operation fees. More in the spring.

Our Annual Meeting and election of BOD members will be held on 25 January 2020 at Kirtland Community College on 4 Mile Road in Grayling. See the enclosed flyer for details and registration. You can also send us your votes for new BOD members and re-elections.

Our fall banquet was a great success! Thanks to all of you! We also had donations toward the USGS Gage on the NB. We give thanks to John Niemann, Ron Barch and Willow Classic Rods for the bamboo rod raffle donations that brought over $4,000 to the chapter. We also had the drift boat raffle that brought in about $2,800. You are the heart of our chapter and keep us going.

My heartfelt thanks to all of you for your support! Send ideas, suggestions….etc. We will listen.

Best wishes for a great holiday season!

Karen
Manistee Projects – Jim Anderson

Project work from an UMRA HIA grant continues on the Upper Manistee River. During the summer of 2019, 30 instream fish habitat structures were either restored from previous DNR work or newly constructed in areas identified with the help of the DNR fish biologist. The area where the construction took place was below the Tree Farm to approximately half way down stream to Yellow Trees Landing. Permit applications are being completed and will be submitted prior to the end of the year for the same type of work during the summer of 2020. There are 26 new sites identified for 2020 from where the work left off in 2019 to Yellow Trees Landing. The majority of the work that has been completed as well as future instream habitat work is with private land owners along both Yellow Trees road on the west and Portage Creek road on the east side of the river.

Another little known fact is that UMRA continues to pay for 8 porta johns each summer placed along access sites of the Upper Manistee River from CR 612 downstream to M66. All river users are able to take advantage of this convenience. These are NOT refuge site for trash!! They are also NOT provided by the DNR.

Over the past couple years both the N Branch of the Manistee and Portage Creek have been cleared for navigation. The N Branch clearing was from the Flowing Well property downstream to Kniss Rd. Portage Creek was cleared from below the Camp Grayling small arms ranges to the confluence of the Upper Manistee River. This past fall a report of an excess sand load on the N Branch appeared at the Kniss Road abandon bridge. It is unclear why this happened since the removal of beaver dams and timber that had blocked navigation was removed 2 years prior. UMRA will be investigating this occurrence during the summer of 2020.
Photos from the wilds of the NB of the Manistee.

Au Sable & West Branch Big Creek Habitat Improvement Projects – Steve Sendek

Two projects occupied the work crews in 2019.

Maghielse Tract: The first project was to install 64 structures on the Maghielse Tract. The original owners were interested in restoring a portion of the upper Au Sable that ran through their property. The interest was generated by the success of work completed just downstream through the Williams tract. Discussions with the owners progressed and planning was completed but the property was sold to the State. Some delays in permitting caused the work to start in mid June. Approximately half the planned structures were installed in 2019. The remainder of the structures will be completed in 2020. Once these structures are installed, the reach from Batterson Rd near Frederic to M-72 in Grayling will have been restored.

West Branch of Big Creek-Lovells: The second project was the installation of 19 new habitat structures based on the positive effect on the stream from the previous work conducted downstream from Spectacle Creek on the West Branch of Big Creek. The addition of the new structures was completed in September 2019.

Beaver management on West Branch Big Creek will continue. A beaver dam was removed at the powerline in late fall. A beaver dam was also removed from the Middle Branch Big Creek. Beaver trapping of nuisance beaver has continued through the summer and fall. Those enjoying the Au Sable watershed should keep track of beaver activity. Location, preferably GPS coordinates, and the type of activity should be recorded and/or remembered. Sightings should be reported to Steve Sendek.
Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter Volunteer Projects for 2019 – Bob Andrus

Mason-Griffith began this year’s volunteer projects in mid-April when they planted three hundred oak seedlings in the TU Knight Tract. The property located on the Au Sable river ten miles east of Grayling is owned by TU National and managed by their Michigan TU Property Management Board. The project was conducted over three days by eleven volunteers, most working multiple days.

On May 1st and 2nd volunteers conducted Chapter Michigan Clean Water Corps insect surveys on the Au Sable upstream of Grayling to monitor water quality. The site at Frederic is a control site and monitored every spring and the second site is a new monitoring site located between Frederic and Grayling in the state’s newly acquired Maghielse Tract. Shortly after the survey, the Chapter’s summer work crew began a two-year stream restoration project on the Maghielse Tract’s one and a half miles of river. After the insects are gathered they are taken to the lab and identified by Chapter members. Both sites scored excellent with over thirty different families of insects being present at each of the stations.

The Chapter completed its third cedar planting project in the MDNR’s Williams Tract on May 9th and 11th. Over twenty volunteers constructed cages and planted seedlings in the remote site on the Au Sable River upstream of Grayling. This was the ninth year that the Chapter has partnered with the Au Sable River Property Owners Association and MDNR to plant cedar seedlings on State land.

In late May eight Chapter volunteers removed an old beaver dam on the Middle Branch of Big Creek near Lovells and walked nearly two miles of river looking for additional dams. A few days later three volunteers returned to remove a new dam that was found.

MiCorps insect survey sites on the East Branch near Hartwick Pines and on the Au Sable at Guide’s Rest were surveyed on June 8th. Thirteen MGFTU volunteers participated in the collecting of insects which were later identified in the biology lab at the new Kirtland Community College Grayling campus. This survey is conducted to support the Gahagan Nature Preserve’s Au Sable MiCorps project.

On July 10th and 11th thirteen volunteers conducted maintenance at seven heavily used access sites on the Au Sable between Burtons Landing and Conners Flats. Sites were located at County road ends, on TU properties, and on State Access sites.

In mid-August volunteers conducted a fish population survey on a reach of river upstream of Grayling. Twenty years ago, the Salling dam was removed and the impoundment drained. Five years ago, Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter received a grant to restore that reach of river and conducted river mapping and a population survey. This year’s population survey followed a two-year Chapter stream restoration project on that reach of river. The first day involved capturing brook and brown trout, then measuring and marking (fin clipping) the fish which were then released back into the river. On day two we again captured and measured the trout but we also identified those that were new captures and those that were recaptures. Using a formula population estimate could be made from that data.

In August we convoyed up to the newly acquired MDNR Maghielse Tract where the Chapter’s work crew was conducting stream restoration. Twelve volunteers worked with the crew constructing several fish structures.
In October six volunteers traveled to the Deward Tract to conduct an inventory to determine what will be needed for next year’s cedar project. After five years of planting in the Tract, many of the seedlings have outgrown cages and new seedlings will also be replanted where needed.

This year’s volunteers included: Dick Buss, Paul Mesack, Pam Alexander, Gary Torkeo, Jim Lawless, Robb Smith, Ralph Rucinski, Joyce Haxton, Michele Arnholt, Terry Marsh, Marie Harrington, Sarah Lawless, David Smith, Karen Harrison, Bob Lafferty, Susan Thiel, Judy Mesack, Bill Osantowski, Howard Johnson, Kevin Osantowski, Gary Isaman, Paul Paske, Tom Baird, Terry Lyons, John Bebo, Bob Andrus, Rick Tyler, Shayna Theys, Claude Agnello, Matthies Bonzo, Steve Sendek, Shirley Dillon, Boyd Dillon and Mark Rais.

I hope no one was missed.

**MITU Youth Camp – Karen Harrison**

Brett Wheeler was sponsored by MGFTU to attend the 2019 Trout Unlimited Youth Camp. His letter requesting our support is as follows:

Hi my name is Brett Wheeler. I'm interested in attending the 2019 Trout Unlimited Youth Camp for Chapter I. I have grown up in a family that loves to fly fish. My dad was a self-taught fly fisherman at the age of 8. He also wrote a pocket guide about fly fishing. My Grandfather also is avid bass fisherman and loves fly fishing as well. My sister Brooke attended the camp last summer and was chosen as a counselor this year. So, I come from a family with a background of fishing!

I've grown up loving the outdoors. I have camped, hiked, fished, kayaked, canoed, and duck and deer hunted all over Michigan and parts of Ohio. I myself am newer to fly fishing so I feel that I could really benefit from this camp. It is my understanding that the camp offers a broad range of what is needed to grow in these skills.

I live on a feeder stream approximately 500 yards from the Au Sable in Grayling near the Wakeley Bridge. Therefore, conservation of the river is very important to me. I'm a rather shy person and hopefully this camp with help me with that. It will give me the opportunity to meet other kids that also enjoy fly fishing.

Other activities I enjoy are: I have played soccer since kindergarten (mostly travel), I have attended several church camps, and I enjoy carpentry, home improvement and fixing things with my dad. I also like taking walks and playing with my two chocolate labs River and Willow.

Thank you so much for considering me as a candidate for the Trout Unlimited Youth Camp. I would be honored to attend.

Following Brett’s attending the Youth Camp he wrote us a letter of thanks.

I am very thankful I was chosen for the Chapter 1 2019 camper for the Michigan Youth Trout Unlimited this year.

I made so many new friends who love to trout fish. Together we learned to tie flies, cast, build trout habitats, protect the streams, and conservation of our fabulous river.
At camp, there were times where we had to sit down in class and really pay attention to the leaders and other times where we laughed and got to mess around. In those times we really got to know one another.

I would like to thank all the counselors and leaders for their help teaching me everything I need to know to be the best fly fisherman I can be.

**Youth Activities – Jim Wilkinson**

One fishing trip for the Middle School Fishing Club was held this fall at the Fish Hatchery in Grayling. There were many whoops and hollers as fish were caught. All attendees went home with dinner. Thanks to the Anglers of the Au Sable for this opportunity.

The Middle School Fishing Club had their first meeting to design t-shirts for the fishing club and for the fly tying class. Designs have not been finalized, but there is a lot of creativity going into these shirts that will be printed by Xpress Copy in Grayling. Middle School fly tying class will begin the 3rd week of January at the Grayling Middle School. The class is for 5th to 8th graders.

Trout in the classroom will again be conducted in the Middle School. Two tanks will be maintained through the winter with the survivors returned to the wild in late spring.

**USGS – Chemical Analysis Results**

Angela Brennan of USGS gave a PowerPoint Slide presentation of the results of the assays from the 30-day sampling on the North Branch of the Au Sable which was conducted in June of 2018 at the Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter BOD Meeting in November. Major points were as follows:

1. The semi-permeable membrane samplers were placed at four locations in the North Branch between June 1 and June 30, 2018. Locations were Kellogg Bridge, Twin Bridge, the Ford and a spot in Michawye directly near the golf course.
2. The report is under administrative review and should be published by the end of 2019. The project was delayed because of the government shutdown last year.
3. The final report will compare toxicity thresholds and levels of concern, as well as compare the values found in the North Branch to those of other rivers in lower Michigan.
4. Organic chemicals were detected at every sampling location on the North Branch of the Au Sable River, however not all chemicals were detected at every location.
5. The site with the highest number of organic chemicals detected was North Branch of the Au Sable River at Kellogg's Bridge with 26 of the 97 targeted organic chemicals detected.
6. The North Branch of the Au Sable River at Twin Bridge Rd had the lowest number of organic chemicals detected (16).
7. The most frequently detected organic contaminants detected at all sampling locations (including replicate sample at The Ford Rd) include legacy pesticides pentachloroanisole, trans-chlordane, p,p'-DDE, and p,p'-DDT; PBDE’s including PBDE-28; and PAHs including 2-methylphenanthrene.
8. It was emphasized that this data provides a great baseline for the NB Au Sable since this is the first time this type of study has been conducted here.
USGS Flow Gage on the NB of the Au Sable – Jim Wilkinson

Jim Wilkinson, USGS, reported that the stream gage and temperature monitor were installed in the North Branch at Kellogg Bridge on November 8th. The stream gage data location on the website was shown. He also explained the process for determination of stream flow, as well as how to get graphs from up to three locations to look at on the same graph. Discharge data should become available in the summer of 2020.

Storm Drain Labels – Mark Rais

The Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited is looking into the purchase of drain placards that say “NO DUMPING - DRAINS TO RIVER”. The intent is to install the placards on all drains in the City of Grayling to remind residents and visitors, that what contaminates go into the drainage system, goes into the Au Sable River. We hope that these placards can be installed on approximately 250 city sewer drains within the City in early spring 2020. This is a Grayling Middle School project that has been supported by the Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited and the Michigan Fly Fishing Club.

Annual Meeting and Election of Board of Director Members

The annual meeting will take place on 25 January 2020 at Kirtland Community College on 4 Mile Road in Grayling. See the insert for how to register, etc.

Festivities start at 5:30 with social hour. Dinner will be at 6:30.

We will have our Annual Meeting where we elect BOD members.

The following awards will be presented to selected recipients:
Brook Trout – Individual
Rainbow Trout – Organization or Business
Brown Trout – Resource Professional

Speaker – Steve Johnson

Redd Surveys on the North Branch – 2006 to 2018

Redd surveys have been conducted by volunteers each October/November since 2006. Data collected for each year sampled has been processed for identified reaches and compiled into a presentation comparing Reaches, Redd locations (GPS), Redd areas and depth.

Are you of that age? Where you have to take a required minimum distribution from your IRA? Consider lowering your tax burden by donating to MGFTU.
Action Items to Assist MGFTU

1. Buy on Smile.Amazon.com and designate Mason-Griffith as your non-profit of choice.
2. Donate the MGFTU and look into matching funds from your employer.
3. Check to see if your employer will make a contribution to a non-profit for volunteer hours.
4. Become involved.
5. Attend an event where MGFTU is present and volunteer to help with the booth!
6. Send suggestions/comments to: info@masonGriffithTU.org.

Newsletter Contributors

Officers/Directors/Advisors

Officers
Karen Harrison - President
Boyd Dillon – Vice President
Gary Vetter - Treasurer
Mark Hendricks - Secretary

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Steve Johnson
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