

Regular Coalition Meetings

2019

October 10

2020

January 9

April 9

At 10:00 AM

Harrisville Library



Working Together to Restore and Protect Our Natural Resources

REMUS DAM REMOVAL ON EAST BRANCH COMPLETED

Following the plan for project completion in late August, 2019, Huron Pines project manager Josh Leisen sent these before and after pictures of the small collapsed concrete dam on the private property of Jeff and Dana Ramus – property which lies within the PRVEL watershed, close to E Trask Lake Rd in Lincoln, MI on the East Branch of the Pine River. The obsolete dam was impeding fish passage, altering stream hydrology, and changing the natural flow of the water. Huron Pines was contacted by the Ramus family who felt the dam might be a liability, but also understood the advantages of returning the river to its natural flow.



Before

By removing the dam, natural river function has been restored and aquatic habitat reconnected to over 1.25 upstream miles. Funding for this project amounted to almost \$40,000 which came from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Sustain our Great Lakes Program, and Michigan DNR Habitat Improvement Program. Work was completed in about two days on time in late August.

Just adjacent to this site, work on the road stream crossing at E. Trask Lake Rd noted as being in need of restoration in our Watershed Management Plan is projected to start in September, 2019 in partnership with the Alcona County Road commission.



After

Macro-invertebrate Sampling Update

by Arnie Leriche

Our Fall 2019 macro invertebrate sampling is scheduled for the following dates:

- Wed 9/25 (Primary) w/ students
- Sat 9/28 (Second date) w/o students
- Tue 10/1 (Weather make-up date) w/students

Note - Arnie is leaving town on October 2nd, so no make up date has been set for the 9/28 sampling date.

Check out our Facebook page at

[www.facebook.com/pineriverwatershed](http://www.facebook.com/pineriverwatershed)

for changes, times, details and more interesting facts about our watershed projects. Please sign up for macro sampling in the special “Event” post because this can allow us to quickly notify you if a last minute weather situation requires a delay or

cancellation. You may also contact Arnie via email at [aleriche526@gmail.com](mailto:aleriche526@gmail.com).



**Targeting Invasive Plant Species**



Phragmites

Invasive Phragmites is a perennial grass that has been damaging ecosystems. It is not clear how it was transported to North America from its native home in Eurasia. Invasive Phragmites is an aggressive plant that spreads quickly and out-competes native species for water and nutrients.

In the spring of 2019, members of the Pine River VanEtten Lake Watershed (PRVEL) board met with staff from Huron Pines conservation organization (HP) to discuss how best to identify, treat, and potentially eradicate several priority plant species that are considered to be non-native or invasive species (IS) – those that have been introduced from other regions and established a firm presence within the state, encroaching on native species and upsetting the balance of the ecosystems they infest.

A partnership agreement was drawn up and in response to that signing, an IS training session was offered by HP to learn how to identify and manage IS within our region. Several PRVEL members took the training and then proceeded to put that knowledge to work with a site visit on private property to assess reported infestation of Phragmites, one of the best known IS within the state. Work on this site is expected to be completed in the next two months.

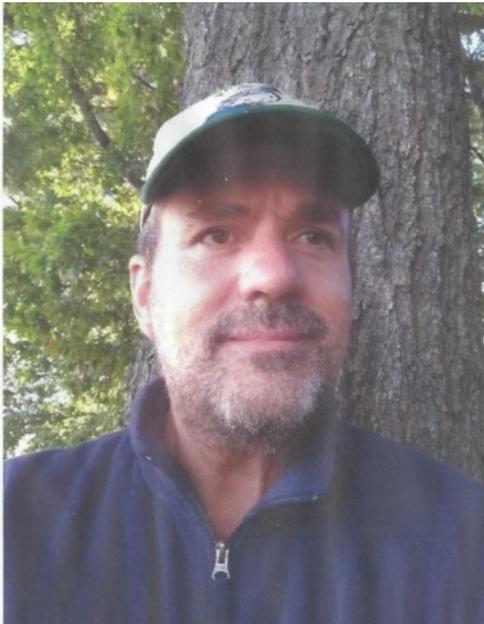
**ERA SITE UPDATE**  
**\_By Russell Williams**

Pine River Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition cooperates with the Michigan Department of Natural Resources in managing an 80 acre Ecological Reference Area floodplain forest on the Pine River. The parcel is bounded on all sides by private property and is roughly bisected by the Pine River. Easiest access is by navigating the Pine River upstream from Van Etten Lake, for less than a mile.

Doug Jager, who has done exemplary work in leading PRVEL's efforts on this project for years, recently moved downstate. Russell Williams has volunteered to continue Doug's work, along with other PRVEL members.

Recent efforts concerning the ERA have been mainly focused on establishing introductions and contacts. Both Tom Barnes - DNR Unit Manager, and Tim Cwalinski - DNR Fisheries Biologist, have been contacted regarding PRVEL involvement. On August 16th boat passage to the ERA was verified and some downed tree barriers were removed.

The next step is organizing some site survey and control activities. Currently discussions are ongoing with possible interested parties. The goal is to achieve site activity by the end of September.



Russell Williams grew up in Rochester, Michigan and spent many weekends and summers in Oscoda at the family cottage. He has always loved the water and the woods. For 4 years he did some traveling with the US Army. After leaving the Army, he studied Forestry and graduated from Michigan State University. At heart he's a conservationist, believing firmly in wise use principles.

Work experiences include adventures with the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and the US Forest Service, amongst a few others over the years. Currently a practicing Consulting Forester, as Russell Williams Forestry LLC. Active credentials include Certified Forester - Society of American Foresters, Certified Arborist - International Society of Arboriculture, and Certified Commercial Pesticide Applicator – State of Michigan.

Now living in Oscoda, writing forest management plans, drinking coffee, and sneaking donuts. He's an active Board Member of the Pine River Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition, and the Iosco County Conservation District. Always looking for ways to make a difference on the ground, usually preferring to be outside, and taking small steps to influence positive action.

**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR  
INVASIVE PLANT MONITORING**

Watching out for unwanted non-native invasive plants takes some self-education along with a desire to keep our natural areas just that – natural. With so much area to cover within the watershed, it seems a daunting task to try and locate areas that need to be monitored and/or treated, so in order to get the job done, we need many volunteers to assist – both in finding and reporting problem areas as well as helping with eradication.

If you have an interest in helping PRVEL with this program, please contact Russell Williams at [jrusswill@gmail.com](mailto:jrusswill@gmail.com) and literally “lend a hand.” Field guide booklets will be available to assist in identification.

**Help Us Make the Giving Tuesday Event Successful!**

**PRVEL to apply for the CFNEM fundraising program**

Due to the positive response PRVEL has received in the past few years by way of donations to the Community Foundation of NE Michigan (CFNEM) fundraising program called **Giving Tuesday**, we will once again submit our application for 2019 to join several local non-profits in hoping to garner monetary support for our conservation programs and projects.

**The date for this year's 24 hour online campaign will be Tuesday, December 3, 2019.**

Watch for further updates via member emails and Facebook announcements and if we are accepted again this year, please show your support by donating to help us fund conservation projects to protect and preserve our watershed. Please be aware that our only source of operating funds and almost all of them come to us during the past few years on Giving Tuesday. Here is a chance to make your dollars pay off right in your own backyard!



***Another Michigan Lake and Stream Associations Name Change***

The organization, Michigan Lake and Stream Associations, INC (MLSA) was formed in 1961. MLSA was created as a 501(c)3 non-profit corporation made up of organizations, corporations, associations, and individuals who share the goal of preserving and protecting Michigan's vast heritage of freshwater resources and protecting riparian rights. In 2018, the then Board of MLSA voted to change the name to Michigan Lake Stewardship Associations, INC. (Still "MLSA" and use of the plural for association). The reason in short was to focus on inland lakes and stewardship. Since then the organization has been faced with constant questions regarding the change and as a result the current board, with respect for the needs of current and future members, held a Special Meeting and voted with a "super-majority" to change the legal name to "MICHIGAN LAKES AND STREAMS ASSOCIATION, INC" (MLSA) as it has been used by so many people for so many years. The organization is committed to using a strategic plan to serve, educate and represent our members as in the past and to take steps and initiate programs that significantly expand educational efforts and focus on riparian rights.

**WATERSHED WILDLIFE WATCH**

**Raccoons**

Raccoons (mammals) are easily recognized by their black and brown color, black "mask" around their eyes, and their ringed tails. They are great climbers and are commonly found around dumpsters, sheds, garages, factories, chimneys, and house attics. They bear their young in the spring, having 2 to 5 "kits" which they raise until the fall, when they are



ready to go on their own. They are known for their intelligence, able to remember solutions to tasks for several years. They are usually nocturnal and eat both plants, vertebrates, and invertebrates. Considered a nuisance by many people, they are often trapped and re-located. Found in forests, marshlands, mountains, and urban areas, they are most often killed by hunters or vehicle injuries.

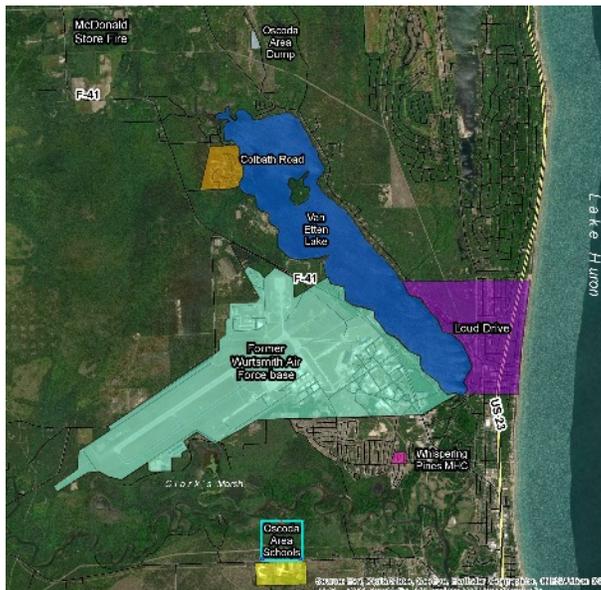
## PFAS in the Watershed

by Dan Stock, Water Quality Monitor

A group of chemicals used in common household products have received increased scrutiny due to environmental concerns. The chemicals, synthetic perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs) or more specifically per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), have been widely used in both industrial and consumer products. For instance, PFAS have been used in fire-fighting foams, paints, polishes, lubricants, and cookware, and because of their unique ability to repel both oil and water, have been used in a wide variety of consumer products such as stain- and water-resistant food packaging, clothing, and upholstery. Other products that have been manufactured with forms of PFAS include food packaging paper and cardboard materials, insecticides, paint and plumbing tape. Some of the compounds are extremely stable, and some are known to be toxic and to build up in animal tissues. Varying concentrations of different PFAS have been measured in surface waters and biota world-wide.

Two well-studied forms of PFAS are PFOS (perfluorooctane sulfonate) and PFOA (perfluorooctanoate). They are a concern because of the potential health impacts associated with them. Studies on research animals have shown that, over time, PFOS and PFOA can cause liver, thyroid, developmental, and immune system damage. Studies of human exposure have found links to increased cholesterol, changes in the body's hormones and immune system, decreased fertility, and increased risk of certain cancers.

PFAS chemicals can be ingested by drinking contaminated water, eating contaminated fish or



using some consumer products that may still contain the chemical. According to the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR 2017), PFAS are not readily absorbed through skin and are considered a minor exposure pathway when swimming, showering or bathing in PFAS-contaminated water. When humans and other animals consume water or food containing PFAS, these chemicals can remain in the body for many years after

exposure. However, no one can say with certainty that exposure to PFAS chemicals will result in adverse health effects.

The US EPA has set a lifetime health advisory limit (LHAL) for PFOA and PFOS combined at 70 parts per trillion (ppt). The LHAL is the level in drinking water below which no harm to human health is expected even after long term continuous exposure. However, some studies have suggested even lower levels for each of these chemicals and some state health departments, such as Vermont and Minnesota, have established lower health advisory and guidance values. Michigan recently adopted the same 70 ppt limit for PFOA and PFOS in drinking water. However, a review of that adoption is currently in progress. Because these chemicals can bioaccumulate in aquatic ecosystems resulting in higher levels in fish tissue, the health advisory for surface waters is 11 to 12 ppt.

PFAS chemicals have been identified and confirmed in the Oscoda area primarily on or near the former Wurtsmith Air Force Base. A list of these PFAS sites and accompanying map can be found at [www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse](http://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse). Of primary interest as related to the PRVEL watershed is the

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PFAS continued from page 4

seepage of PFAS containing groundwater from the base to the west shore of Van Etten Lake. This seepage has contaminated nearby private wells and also results in lake water concentration exceeding the surface water advisory concentrations and results in frequent foam formation in very high concentrations of PFAS along the shoreline. To date sampling of fish from Van Etten Lake has not resulted in advisories for other than those normally expected for Michigan inland lakes.

In addition ground water at the site of the McDonald Store fire near the corner of F-41 and King's Corner Rd and at the old Oscoda Area Dump North of King's Corner Road and East of Loud Dr. has been found to have PFAS, there is currently no evidence that this water has contaminated local drinking water wells or is entering nearby creeks. The PFAS from a house fire at the Colbath site has been found in home well water and in monitoring wells and is being tested routinely to detect changes and potential problems.

In response to the apparent widespread contamination problem state wide, Michigan Governor Rick

Snyder issued an executive directive in November 2017 establishing the Michigan PFAS Action Response Team (MPART). MPART is comprised of representatives from each of 10 State of Michigan Departments and the Executive Office of the Governor, and has been tasked with providing a coordinated and comprehensive response to address sites across Michigan that have been contaminated by PFAS. The overarching goal of the directive is to promote a cooperative and efficient statewide effort to find PFAS contaminated sites, identify potential human health risks associated with those sites, keep the public informed, and develop plans for reducing human and ecological risk due to the contamination. Governor Witmer has confirmed this executive order.

To keep the public informed, the state has created a website containing information about PFAS contamination and the coordinated efforts currently underway to address the issue. The site will be continually updated as additional information becomes available. The website address is [www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse](http://www.michigan.gov/pfasresponse).

### RIVER KEEPERS' UPDATE - WE WANT YOU!



The River Keepers program is aimed at establishing a better monitoring system to cover the large area encompassed within the watershed. Individuals volunteering for this program are being asked to watch out for things that could be problematic or might require some action to be taken, but also to report back natural occurrences like animal sightings or quality of fishing/hunting.

Thank you to all of our current volunteers – your efforts are greatly appreciated and essential to keeping abreast of conditions within the watershed.

**Please consider being a River Keeper** and contact Carole Plunkey at [caroleplunkey@charter.net](mailto:caroleplunkey@charter.net) or 739-8717 for more details.

**PRVEL Coalition Board**

Chair - Carole Plunkey	<a href="mailto:caroleplunkey@charter.net">caroleplunkey@charter.net</a>
Secretary - Deb Miller	<a href="mailto:higgins.deborah@sbcglobal.net">higgins.deborah@sbcglobal.net</a>
Treasurer - Dan Stock	<a href="mailto:dstock4239@charter.net">dstock4239@charter.net</a>
Scott Lingo	<a href="mailto:scott@targetrealestate.com">scott@targetrealestate.com</a>
Arnie Leriche	<a href="mailto:aleriche526@gmail.com">aleriche526@gmail.com</a>
Russell Williams	<a href="mailto:jrusswill@gmail.com">jrusswill@gmail.com</a>

**Non-Voting Advisors**

US Forest Service	Huron Pines RC&D
USDA-NRCS	DNR/Fisheries
US Fish & Wildlife	DEQ/Water Quality

Welcome to new board member Deb Miller. Deb has agreed to serve as our Secretary and is a great asset to the organization!

**How Can I Volunteer for PRVEL?**

Our conservation group is comprised totally of volunteers, all working together to make things happen for the benefit of the watershed. Please step forward and make 2020 the year you help us make a difference in our watershed.

Ways you can volunteer:

- Macro invertebrate sampling program – Spring and Fall
- Monitoring fishery – place temp loggers
- Invasive species monitoring
- Water quality monitoring
- River Keepers/monitor watershed out in the field
- Write articles for the newsletter
- Serve on the watershed board of directors
- Project workers – out in the field (seasonal)
- Fund raising – bring ideas to the attention of

Contact via email  
as shown above

- Arnie Leriche
- Scott Lingo
- Russell Williams
- Dan Stock
- Carole Plunkey
- Dan Stock
- Carole Plunkey
- Carole Plunkey
- any board member

Yes! I wish to support the water resource improvement efforts in the Pine River Van Etten Lake Watershed with my tax deductible contribution.

Please make your check payable to PRVEL Watershed Coalition and send to:

PRVEL Watershed Coalition  
PO Box 680  
Oscoda, MI 48750

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Street** \_\_\_\_\_

**City** \_\_\_\_\_

**State/Zip** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail** \_\_\_\_\_