



JANUARY 2024
NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

2023 was a remarkable year. What we accomplished exceeded our wildest expectations. It was a testament to Lansing regional community spirit and civic pride.

Thank you to all our partners, sponsors, and hundreds of volunteers who made it possible.

Photo credit:
MSU Photography Club Luke Rokop



JOIN US • MAKE A LASTING IMPACT • THIS IS OUR LEGACY

Thank you to all that have made our work possible and our waterways healthier.



A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Michigan is blessed with an abundance of fresh water, more than any other state in the country. We are surrounded by 21 percent of the planet's fresh surface water in the heart of the world's greatest freshwater ecosystem.

We have access to four Great Lakes; Michigan, Superior, Huron and Erie, and 2,963 miles of Great Lakes shoreline. Running through our state we have approximately 51,438 miles of river, of which 656 miles are designated as wild and scenic.



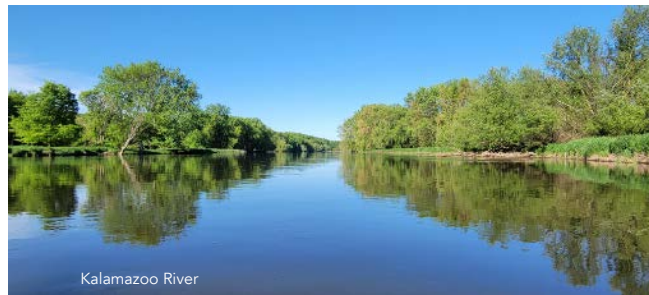
On average, on a daily basis 37.5 billion gallons of water are withdrawn from the Great Lakes Basin, an ecosystem that is essential to the resource value and sustainability of the region.

As a Michigander, you understand we have a shared responsibility to protect and care for our treasured and vulnerable waterways. Imagine the consequences if we don't.

That is the reason why Michigan Waterways Stewards was created. To inspire current and future generations to become environmental stewards and make Michigan's waterways the envy of America's industrial Great Lakes states.

Join us. Make a lasting impact. This is our legacy.

Michael Stout
President and Founder, Michigan Waterways Stewards



Kalamazoo River



Pere Marquette River



Red Cedar River



Grand River



Lake Michigan

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MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS - A YEAR IN REVIEW

OUR BEGINNING

Michigan Waterways Stewards began from a need to address a long-standing problem in our capital city where river-wide obstructions and years of unsightly litter and trash collected, making our prized Grand and Red Cedar rivers unhealthy, unsightly, and in some areas dangerous to use.

Local and state governments were aware of the problem but cited reasons for the lack of priority, funding, and resources needed to solve it. Not to be deterred, we set out on our own and took a community-wide approach to solve.

Our first priority was to address a stretch along the Grand River near an old railroad bridge, north of downtown Lansing. It is believed that this troubled area has been allowed to worsen for as long as ten years. With the help of the new owners of Adrian and Blissfield Railroad company and a small army of volunteers, this section of river with its towering river-wide obstruction and hundreds of pounds of litter and trash was cleared. This area was transformed into one of Lansing's most scenic and pleasant stretches of the Grand River.

Word about the remarkable gains got out. Letters of appreciation, requests for help in other areas, and offers of support, came pouring in. There would be no turning back. A commitment to continue our work was cemented.

OUR INAUGURAL YEAR FAR EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS

Since our start in November of 2022, we have managed over 100 projects, including four community-wide events. We received the support of over 50 organizations from across business and industry, schools and churches, civic and social clubs, and local and state governments. Nearly 850 volunteers were mobilized, resulting in several river-wide obstructions being cleared and over 38 tons of litter, debris, and hazardous items from Lansing regional rivers and adjoining riverbanks, river trails, and unencumbered parks.

While we have proven skilled in cleaning and improving our waterways, we needed to broaden the scope to have greater impact. Michigan Waterways Stewards now focus its efforts on three core areas: (SEA) Stewardship, Education, and Advocacy. We believe our educational component under the title of "Love Our Waterways™" will have the greatest, longest lasting impact.



Grand River, North Lansing, November 2022



Grand River, North Lansing, June 2023



Mount Hope Church, Red Cedar River, June 2023

Protect Our Treasured Rivers.
If you witness any malicious behavior call your local authority.

Photo credit: Mark Kozherovsky, MSU photography club.

Love Our Waterways™ is a brand of Michigan Waterways Stewards.
www.MiWaterwaysStewards.org



MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS - A YEAR IN REVIEW

continued

STEWARDSHIP

Our stewardship practices extend much further than the designated waterways. Our work covers the entire riparian zone including the adjoining riverbanks, river trails, and unencumbered parks. This allows us to collect litter and trash before it makes its way into and pollutes our waterways.

EDUCATION

We believe the greatest win and long-term gain is to heighten awareness about our having a shared responsibility to protect and care for our treasured and vulnerable waterways. It will prove less expensive and less dangerous, and our waterways will be healthier if we keep litter, trash, and other rubbish from easily making it into our waterways in the first place.

We are in the early stages of rolling out our environmental/education programming under the title of "Love Our Waterways™." The initial response has been great.

The programming was created with input from leaders across the Lansing regional area. Our work will advance with the support of R.E. Olds Foundation, Potter Park Zoo, Ingham County 4-H, and other fine organizations to be announced soon. If you have a background in creating education curricula, have a passion for environmental matters, and would like to help, we would love to hear from you.

ADVOCACY

On occasion, we're asked to help with an issue when someone is unsure how to solve it on their own or wants to remain anonymous. Then there are challenges we take on when we believe the solution requires a different approach. There have been eight such projects of which two remain active.

Our greatest focus has been addressing the problem of the hundreds of electric scooters and bicycles discovered in and retrieved from the Red Cedar River. The greatest problem has been with many Spin scooters tossed into the Red Cedar River from the Bogue Street bridge, which connects East Lansing and MSU.

We have led a community-wide approach to solving this problem. Discussions with the cities of Lansing, East Lansing, MSU, and micromobility provider Spin continue.



KEEP A LID ON IT!

Do your part. Make an Impact.
Close the lid to prevent trash and litter from polluting our treasured and vulnerable waterways.



This is a public service announcement from Michigan Waterways Stewards.
www.MiWaterwaysStewards.org

CELEBRATING COMMUNITY

Michigan Waterways Stewards is about creating a community culture of care, personal responsibility, and accountability. During our first year, we have been blessed with an outpouring of community support. With the help of over 50 organizations and nearly 850 volunteers, we have achieved remarkable results.

We're excited to leverage our learnings, continue to improve, and find greater ways to protect and care for our treasured and vulnerable waterways. Join us. Make a lasting impact. This is our legacy.



WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

"Michigan Waterways Stewards has been instrumental in improving the accessibility, useability, and water quality of the Red Cedar River and is responsible for a surge in local stewardship of our watershed."

Robert Belleman, City of East Lansing City Manager

"Your efforts are phenomenal. Thank you sincerely for being a steward over our precious water resources for generations to come."

Beth Bowen, Delta Township Trustee

Working with MWS has been a game changer for Meridian Township. We now feel we have a valuable partner who can coordinate, and manage river care projects, like community wide cleanups.

*Emma Campbell,
Land Stewardship Coordinator
Meridian Township
Parks and Recreation*



- "It is good to see the legacy of river stewardship continue on the Grand."
- "Fantastic work. Your organization is exactly what we need."
- "I am so thankful for partnerships like this one. Thank you for making this community a better place with your existence."
- "Michigan Waterways Stewards is the best thing that has ever happened to our local rivers."
- "Outstanding river stewardship events longggg overdue. Long time coming - stoked about this."
- "Such an incredible transformation. I am blown away by the grassroots efforts, and caretaker responsibility for our shared treasure, our river systems."
- "Your efforts are phenomenal. Thank you sincerely for being a steward of our precious water resources."

LOCAL LEADERS PRAISE OUR VOLUNTEERS



L-R: Mike Stout, Andy Schor

"The transformation we have witnessed is a testament to the power of collective action and the positive change that can result when individuals come together with a common goal."

Andy Schor, Lansing Mayor



L-R: Brett Kaschinske, Mike Stout

"The efforts of these volunteers demonstrate what can be accomplished from those with the will and commitment for the betterment of our community."

*Brett Kaschinske,
Lansing Parks and Recreation Director*



A YEAR IN REVIEW BY THE NUMBERS

Projects Managed	104
Partner Organizations	57
Volunteers Mobilized	848
Tons of Materials Retrieved	38.7
Electric Scooters Retrieved	225
Bicycles Retrieved	160
River Miles Covered	40
River-wide Obstructions Cleared	7
Community-wide Events	4

Our first year far exceeded our greatest expectations. Our crowning achievement was rallying the community and receiving the generous support of hundreds of volunteers.

Our 2023 Lansing Rivers and River Trail Cleanup is said to be the largest volunteer initiative in our capital city in years.

It is amazing the ease and joy in which we can accomplish great things when working together.

OUR INAUGURAL YEAR

2023 Inaugural

Lansing Rivers and River Trail Cleanup

JOIN US. MAKE A LASTING IMPACT. THIS IS OUR LEGACY.

PARTNERS AND EVENT SPONSORS

Volunteer Partner Organizations

THANK YOU TO ALL THAT MADE 2023 POSSIBLE!

SPARTANNEWSROOM

POWERED BY THE MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM

MSU fraternity partners with community for river cleanup

On March 18, the Michigan Waterways Stewards and East Lansing partner with Michigan State's Delta Sigma Psi to host a Red Cedar River cleanup.

IN THE NEWS

Lansing State Journal OPINION

Rivers run cleaner, thanks to volunteers

Nationally, volunteering rates have been on the decline in the past few years. But Lansing is an exception. The efforts of these volunteer organizations what can be accomplished. One theme with the will and commitment for the better for our community.

Lansing State Journal

LOCAL & STATE

Group hopes survey leads to fewer electric scooters in local rivers

Scoters

CityPULSE

Michigan Waterways Stewards work to reclaim Lansing's riverfronts

Volunteers pulled hundreds of electronic scooters from the Red Cedar in 2023.

Lansing State Journal

LOCAL & STATE

Spin officials: We can't keep e-scooters out of the Red Cedar River

Spin officials with the company that has the exclusive contract for electric scooters on Michigan State University's campus said there is little they can do about the dozens of the company's scooters that are ending up in the Red Cedar River.

Lansing State Journal

NEWS 10

OPINION

Transforming Lansing's Grand River into a scenic river gem

THE CORPS RAPPORT

Meridian Conservation Corps Annual Report

5

Lansing State Journal

'MUCH MORE REMAIN'

100 scooters pulled from one bridge near Michigan State University



LANSING RIVERS AND RIVER TRAIL CLEANUP - SEPTEMBER 2023 EVENT HEROES -

TOP VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION DART CONTAINER CORPORATION

Runner Ups: Trout Unlimited - Lansing
Clark Construction Company

MOST ENTHUSIASTIC ORGANIZATION FEDEX - LANSING

Runner Ups: State of Michigan Agencies Group
Trout Unlimited - Lansing

TOP INDIVIDUAL EVENT VOLUNTEER JOE DEWAN

Runner Ups: Max Belbot
Hailie Wiese

TOP YOUTH VOLUNTEER ORGANIZATION CAROL J GREER COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTER

TOP BUSINESS & INDUSTRY PARTNER ADRIAN & BLISSFIELD RAILROAD COMPANY

Runner Up: Canadian National Railway

OFFICIAL OUTFITTER PARTNER MOOSEJAW

OFFICIAL WATERCRAFT PARTNER GREAT LAKES WATERCRAFT

OFFICIAL GOVERNMENT PARTNER CITY OF LANSING



THANK YOU EVERYONE!

EAST LANSING RED CEDAR RIVER CLEANUP



IT'S A COMMUNITY-WIDE CELEBRATION

NOVEMBER 11, 2023



MSU STUDENT GROUPS ACTIVE IN RED CEDAR RIVER POP-UP CLEANUP EVENTS



DELTA SIGMA PHI



DELTA KAPPA EPSILON



DELTA SIGMA PHI



DELTA KAPPA EPSILON



DELTA KAPPA EPSILON



MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS A PREVIEW OF 2024

2024 WILL BE A YEAR OF PROGRAM EXPANSION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

We will sustain and build off those gains made, focus on program and geographic expansion, and capacity building.

LANSING REGIONAL AREA ACTIVITIES

Our second annual Lansing Rivers and River Trail Cleanup dates have been set: Saturday, June 1, and Friday, September 20. Potter Park Zoo is our host partner with event headquarters along the Red Cedar River. We have again committed to two Okemos/East Lansing community-wide events to be hosted by Delta Sigma Phi. They reside along the Red Cedar River. Event dates have not yet been set.

This year we will be giving greater attention to: Sycamore Creek, Municipal Park ponds and lowlands, Tecumseh Park and its adjoining natural area just to the east and along Grand River, Adado Riverfront Park, Turner Park, Cherry Hill Park, and River Point Park.

GEOGRAPHIC EXPANSION

We will be taking our stewardship services to other Michigan areas.

The city of Jackson is the first market we have committed to. We will be partnering with Rotary Club of Jackson. Dart Container Corporation and a resident with plans to build a private boat launch have already pledged their support. We have completed our initial assessment of the Grand River. Events dates have not yet been set.

We plan to partner with Rotary Clubs along the Kalamazoo River and support Eaton Conservation District.

CAPACITY BUILDING

Our success, improved waterways health, and usage are dependent on developing and implementing best practices, acquiring additional equipment, and attracting and retaining great talent. Regarding the latter we are excited about our three most recent additions to our advisory committee. See below to learn about each.

Christopher Greenshields - Operations Management and Safety

Chris is an expert in operations and safety. He provides a wealth of environmental personal and professional experience. Growing up, his father was the head of the Ingham County Sheriff's Department's Dive Team and he was in the boat with him from a very young age. In his 20's Chris became a diver for the same team.

He and his wife share a love for the environment. They started the Washtanong River Conservancy at the headwaters of the Grand River in southern Jackson County. During his time of volunteering, Chris has worked with the DNR, Jackson County Drain Commission, ASTI Engineering, and Grand River Environmental Action Team, for the establishment of the Blue Water Trail in Jackson County.



Christopher Greenshields

To learn more about our other advisory committee members, go to page nine.



COME CLEAN ♦ LEAVE CLEAN

Protect Our Treasured Waterways

STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!

Be A Good Steward. Clean. Drain. Dry.

StopAquaticHitchhikers.org





MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS A PREVIEW OF 2024

Introducing our newest advisory committee members continued.

Dr. Dwight Washington - Environmental Justice and Social Reform

Through a sustainable planning agenda Dr. Washington's work helps communities better facilitate equitable access to social and environmental determinants of health. He is an active and dedicated advocate for environmental and social justice issues.

Presently, Dwight consults and serves with advisory and operational oversight to local, state, and national agencies related to parks, public health, and well-being. Consistent with DEI initiatives, he works closely with organizations to improve accessibility to natural areas and promote the sustainable use of environmental resources for future generations.



Dr. Dwight Washington

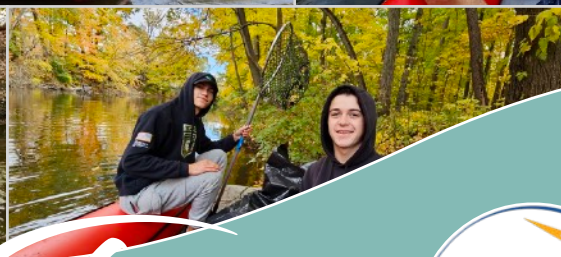
Suzanne Hoholik - Award Winning Journalist

Suzanne is an award-winning newspaper journalist, experienced leader in communications, and a graduate of Michigan State University. She has advanced degrees in business administration and business operations and now works in the health care industry.

Suzanne recently moved back to her native Michigan after living 28 years in three states to the south, where she was active in local environment projects.



Suzanne Hoholik



ECO Tour

REIMAGINE - REDISCOVER - RECONNECT

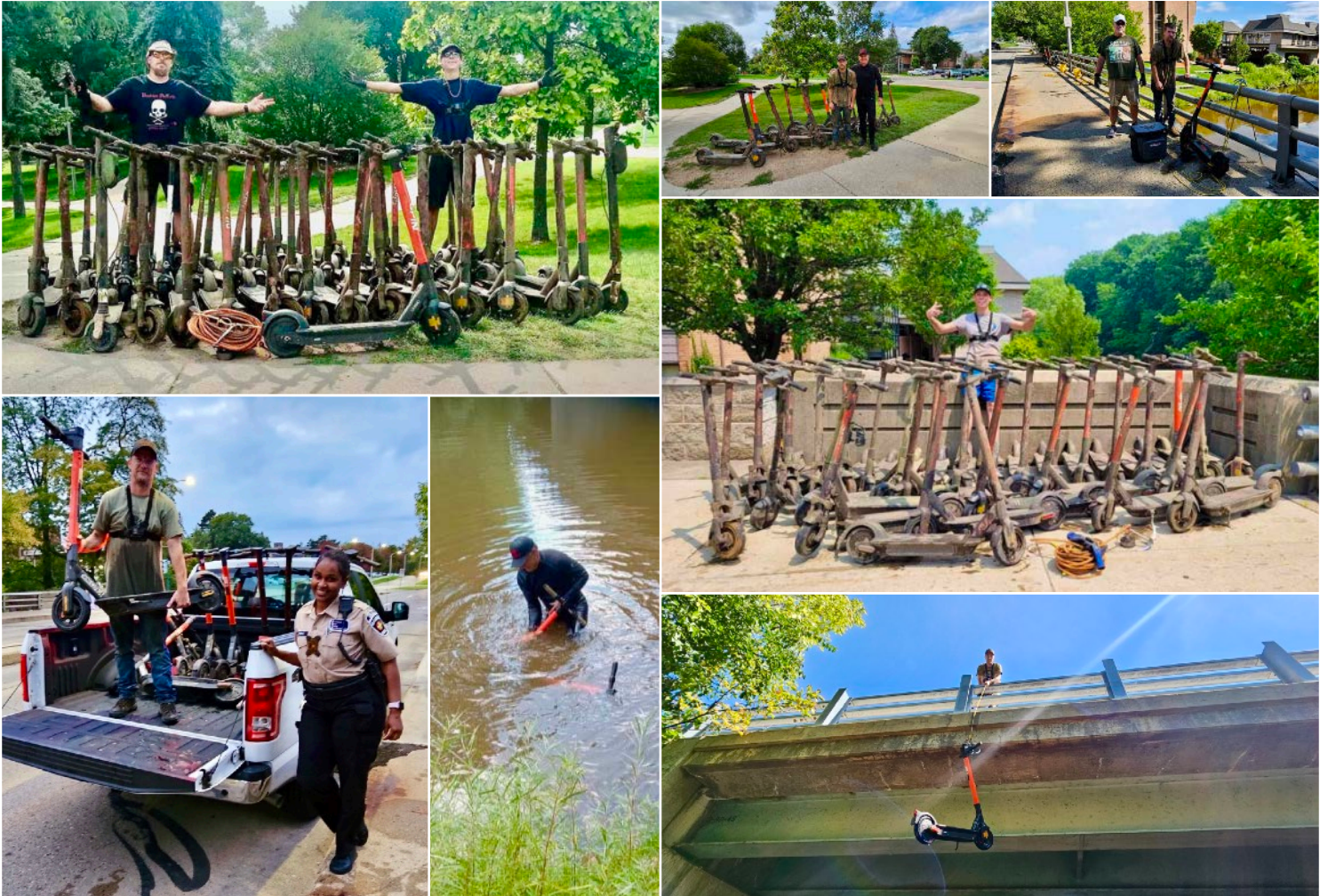


If you too would like to take in views of our capital city or MSU from either our Grand or Red Cedar rivers we invite you to join us on a one or two-hour Michigan Waterways Stewards EcoTour. Food, drink, and all equipment is provided. Stewardship is encouraged, but not required. We simply ask that you enjoy your time and tell your friends about your discovery of Michigan's top urban waterways destination.

THE SUMMER OF 2023 AN INCONVENIENT TRUTH IS REVEALED

Volunteers discover and recover approximately **225 electric scooters** and **160 bicycles** from our rivers.

- The hotspot of activity is the Red Cedar River under East Lansing's Bogue Street bridge.
- The primary contributor is approximately 191 Spin lithium-powered electric scooters.
 - Spin reports recovering 89 of their own, bringing their total loss to approximately 280 scooters.
- Residents surveyed from across the Lansing regional area tell us that this discovery is a surprise, find it upsetting, and deem the behavior unacceptable. They expect more from Spin and desire a community-wide solution.



MICHIGAN WATERWAYS STEWARDS LEAD COMMUNITY-WIDE DISCUSSIONS TO SOLVE

Working with MSU officials and student groups, representatives from the City of East Lansing and the City of Lansing, and community leaders meet to develop a comprehensive campaign to stop the practice of electric scooters and bicycles, and other evidence of campus and urban living being tossed into our rivers.

There are four components to this campaign under the title of Love Our Waterways™: awareness, deterrence, enforcement, and retrieval. The program has been well received with several components having been accepted and soon be implemented.

The City of East Lansing has been most responsive and determined to solve the problem. Because of this discovery and other contributing factors, they revoked Spin's license to operate. They are now working through the required hearing process to ensure the full discovery of facts and allow Spin to respond.





OPINION PAGE FROM MWS BOARD AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We have achieved far more than we ever imagined because we have been blessed with an outpouring of support from hundreds of like-minded people and fine organizations; those who wish to see the health and care for our waterways improve and see community pride and spirit lifted.

It is our vision to help all of Michigan's disadvantaged communities by mobilizing waterways stewardship, by providing all that is needed to conduct small-to-large scale operations to have an immediate impact on our waterways' health, appearance, and usage. What we achieve is only limited by the amount of support received.

There are a number of ways in which you can help. You can assist by sharing our story, volunteering your time, or providing materials or financial support. If you work for an organization, consider becoming either a Michigan Waterways Stewards partner or event sponsor or organize a volunteer team. It makes for a great team-building event.

Thank you to all that have made our work possible and our waterways healthier. It has been a remarkable first year and we can't wait to see what 2024 brings.

Michael Stout
President and Founder, Michigan Waterways Stewards



Michael Stout

A HEARTFELT THANKS TO ALL

It is difficult to envision a more successful start-up year than the one the Michigan Waterways Stewards had in 2023. More than 100 projects including four community wide events were created resulting in the clean-up of rivers, river banks and streams in the Capitol area.

More than 800 individuals from college campuses, faith based communities to the corporate hallways rolled up their sleeves and got to work beautifying our local natural resources. The result you ask - more than 38 tons of uninvited "stuff" were removed from miles of our local rivers and river banks including 225 electric scooters and 160 plus bikes. Heartfelt thanks and champion remarks came in the form of extensive media coverage, recognition from elected officials and corporate sponsorships.

The genesis of this organization and success is the founder and president Michael Stout. The combination of Michael's love of our waterways and a blocked river passage precipitated his forming the Michigan Waterways Stewards, a tax-deductible nonprofit entity whose mission is Stewardship, Education and Advocacy. It is a pleasure and privilege to be a part of this organization committed to preserving our gifted waterways. It's a resource in and of itself, where one can make a difference.

Michael Green
MWS Director, Officer and General Counsel



Michael Green



OPINION PAGE

FROM MWS BOARD AND ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

continued

IT'S A SHARED COMMITMENT

As a proud partner of Michigan Waterways Stewards (MWS) in 2023, Great Lakes Watercraft looks forward to another year of meaningful collaboration. Our involvement has been a humbling experience, contributing to the revitalization of the greater Lansing watershed.

Our role in the large-scale cleanups was facilitated by our Takacat inflatable catamarans and Torqeedo electric outboards. These compact, eco-friendly crafts were instrumental in the cleanups, offering a perfect blend of accessibility and sustainability for waterways conservation.

Working with MWS has deepened our commitment to environmental stewardship and community engagement. We are eager to continue this partnership in 2024, supporting MWS's initiatives with our products and shared passion for protecting Michigan's waterways.

Max Belbot
President, Great Lakes Watercraft
MWS Advisory Council Member



Max Belbot

DRIVEN TO RESTORE OUR BEAUTIFUL WATERSHED

I have been a friend of Michigan rivers for as long as I can remember. Growing up, my father was a retired member of the US Navy's Underwater Demolition Teams and SEAL Team-2. In the 1980's he was the head of the Ingham County Dive Team and the head of Civil Defense.

From the age of ten I would tag along with my father on heavy rescue runs, and drownings in greater Ingham County, especially the Grand and Red Cedar rivers. I drove the police boat at twelve and by thirteen became a fair hand on the water. I started diving as soon as I could stand up with a tank on my back and earned my first dive certification at fifteen. By twenty-three, I secured my spot on the Ingham County Underwater Search and Recovery Team as a Deputy at the Ingham County Sheriff's Office. Becoming a professional Dive/Rescue Specialist is a highlight of my professional career. Upon the dissolution of the Dive Team I left the county.

Since then I have worked in both the public and private sectors. I have worked on special restoration projects on Henry Ford's Fair Lane Estate on the Rouge River, Nankin Lake at Nankin Mills Recreation Area, Washtanong River Conservancy's RedRidge Restoration Project on the upper Grand River, the committee to remove the North Lansing Dam, and the DNR's steering committee for the Blue Water Trail on the upper Grand River.

Looking back on a 30-year career I think about how I would like the next few decades to go, and unequivocally, that would be in service of our community and its beautiful rivers. Time is my most precious commodity and I make sure that I don't waste it.

Upon meeting with Michael Stout of the Michigan Waterways Stewards, I knew that we shared a drive for restoring our beautiful watershed to its natural glory. I believe that fostering education and recreation activities on or near water, then appreciation and stewardship will follow. I look forward to meeting all the people who share in this and I will do my part in helping our staff and volunteers have a safe, productive, and rewarding volunteer experience.

I hope to see you all on the river in 2024. Let's go!

Christopher Greenshields, PG Group, Director of Safety and Security
MWS Advisory Council Member



Christopher Greenshields

2024 Second Annual

Lansing Rivers and River Trail Cleanup

JOIN US • MAKE A LASTING IMPACT • THIS IS OUR LEGACY.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

SATURDAY, JUNE 01

MAY 30, JUNE 01

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

SEP 20, 21

• Equipment, food, drink, and other hospitality provided.

*Can't make the main event date? No worries. There is always time to make a difference. Join us during any of our three event days.



PARTNERS AND EVENT SPONSORS



Volunteer Organizations



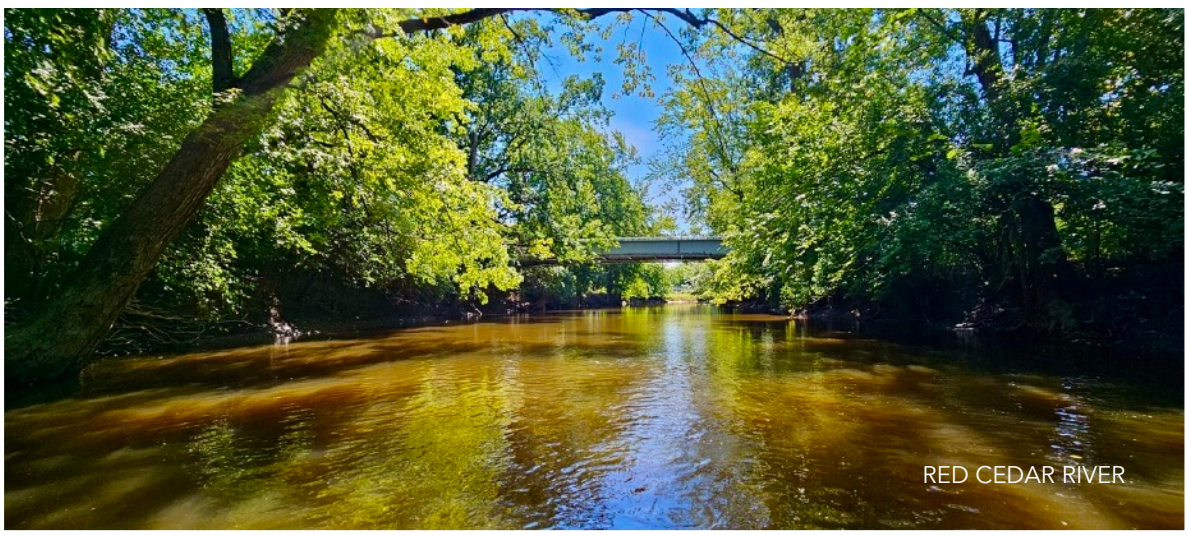
PLEDGE YOUR SUPPORT
WE'LL ADD YOUR LOGO TOO

If you too would like to be a Michigan Waterways Stewards partner, event sponsor, or volunteer, drop us a note. We would love to hear from you.



A CLEAN RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT

REIMAGINE • REDISCOVER • RECONNECT



RED CEDAR RIVER



RED CEDAR RIVER



GRAND RIVER



GRAND RIVER