



May 4, 2025

TO: Jim Seidel  
FR: Mike Stout  
RE: Kalamazoo River Assessment - Albion with continuation to Ceresco

Thank you for joining me yesterday and helping me with shuttling services to Ceresco. It was a beautiful day to be on the water to assess the conditions and enormity of work that may be needed.

I am excited about what we will achieve. When done, Albion's Kalamazoo River and the millrace will look great, providing passive recreation opportunities that has not been available in possibly several years. One will soon be able to paddle from Albion College to Lake Michigan without having to portage around anything other than those few man-made dams.



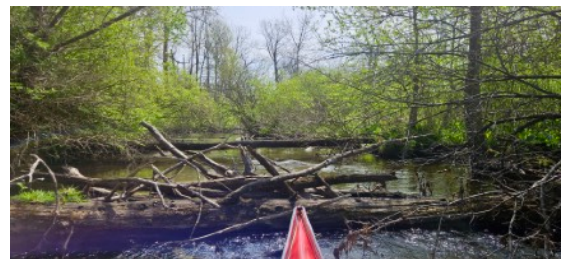
Assessment - Part 1 (East of downtown)

When I launched in the morning and made my way up river I was surprised by the number of deer that got spooked and were pushed out. What a great way to begin the day.

This stretch of the river, from Victory Park to Albion College, is more choked than originally thought. But, because of the shallow waters and easy access, and apparent small-to-midsized trees, it all appears well within our capacity.



The addition of the millrace is fine. This too appears to be of shallow water. The only area of concern is where the millrace runs into the gates toward town. This presents a high-risk area. But I too am confident we can manage this as well.



What we will do is create navigable lanes from Albion College through all of Albion. In line with our mission to protect, care for, and improve our treasured and vulnerable waterway for fish and wildlife, recreation and sport, we will be mindful of what we can do to protect and enhance natural habitat for fish and wildlife.

### Creating Navigable Lanes

When conducting work we will be mindful of the skillset of novice paddler and the need for navigable lanes that do not provide quick, sharp turns, which may result in a kayak or canoe getting sideways. This can present a spill and a possible dangerous situation.



### Creating Natural Habitat

We follow the practices as prescribed by [Woody Debris Management](#). Where we cannot safely secure cleared woody debris will remove it from the river, not toss it on private property and avoid messing up any public land.

We will work closely with Albion area volunteers and Zick's Body Shop to safely remove the woody from the water, minimize any disruption or damage to river's edge or infrastructure. This will be staged for the City to later collect and carry away.

We will trim outreaching and overhanging branches and limbs to create safe navigable lanes, a well-groomed appearance, all the while maintaining shade to provide for cooler water temperatures for the benefit of fish and wildlife.

When done, this stretch of river will be a source of community pride.

### Protecting Infrastructure

I noticed a lot of trees growing from the side of cement and stone walls. I suggest that we cut them close the wall to prevent further growth and risk further damage to protective infrastructure.

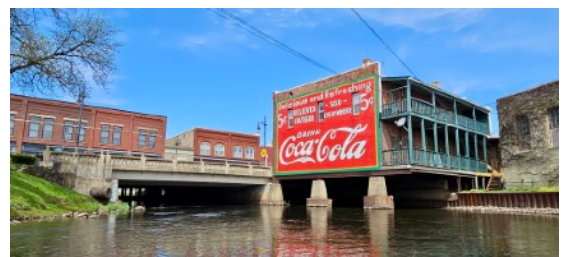


West of where the two branches of the Kalamazoo River meet were in surprisingly good condition, even when paddling underneath bridges through town. There is the matter of tires and other debris needed to be collected.

I suspect the recent rains and floodwaters pushed any woody debris downriver. Evidence of this was downriver, to be discussed later.

### Assessment - Part 2 (West of downtown)

There are two areas which pose great risk for accident or worse. (1) A large fallen tree, with its root ball on private property, has created a river-wide obstruction just downriver from town. (2) The old railroad crossing transformed into a pedestrian bridge is now fully choked.



### Single Fallen Large Tree

1. On river-left, on this day water levels were too high to pass underneath the narrow gap. River-right was choked with woody debris, litter, trash, and other evidence of upstream urban living.

Here we can clear the unsightly litter, trash, and other unsightly urban debris. The need here will be to afterward cut and clear the top of the fallen tree to create a wide, safe, navigable lane. I suspect that the limbs from top of the tree remain intact, grabbing everything attempting to make its way down river.

Being mindful of water levels in the late season, we will need to determine if further cutting of the fallen tree on the river-right side is needed.

When done, the City will need to determine if it wishes to remove this fallen tree in its entirety.

### Pedestrian Bridge

2. As expected, this is the greatest challenge. With the recent heavy rains and high floodwaters, this area's conditions have worsened since our last trip. This old railroad bridge, with its narrow spans placed on a diagonal, acts as a catch basin for all things making its way down river; woody debris, litter, trash, and other evidence of urban living.

The entire width of the river here is blocked. Because of the steep slope river-left, the natural portage option is river-right. The quickest reentry would have been over a small, partially blocked, muddy island. But when walking around a tree I came across a mother goose sitting on her nest of eggs. Within just a few feet, I was surprised I was not attacked.

She let me see an alternative route, one along the riverbank. This posed a problem because of steepness and thick woody debris and not having an previously cut path to navigate.

In this area it is our plan to:

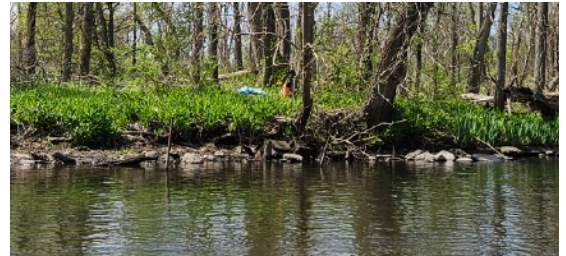
1. Remove all visible litter, trash, and other unsightly unnatural debris caught up in this debris field
2. Clear two spans river-right, and left of the small island, to allow for safe and easy navigation
3. Clear the area right of the small island to improve ease of passage in this area if late needed.
4. Create a generous size path along the right riverbank for future portage needs.



### Litter and Trash Pickup

In the same area, on the west side of the west of the riverbank and slightly west from the pedestrian bridge there is considerable litter, trash, and other unsightly debris that needs to be picked up.

It is either the site of an abandoned homeless encampment or is evidence of a long-time and well used fishing site.



### Connecting Communities

Further down the Kalamazoo River the river is navigable. Although it is regularly challenged with fallen trees, outreaching and overhanging limbs. Then there are the areas that present tricky turns or where you have to jump a log to continue.

It is our recommendation that the stretch from Albion to Merengo be cared for to beautify and improve navigation in manner consistent with the practices as prescribed by [Woody Debris Management](#). To manage this stretch it would be less difficult than Albion was too Victory Park and more in-line with the work we did in Marshall last year.

When finished, this stretch of the Kalamazoo River from Albion to Merengo, or further down to Marshall, will provide area residents and out-of-town guest with a wonderful natural asset and passive recreation opportunities that you would typically only expect much further up north.

To view a sampling of photos from yesterday's Kalamazoo River Assessment from Albin to Ceresco, [click here](#).

Again, thank you for reaching out to Michigan Waterways Stewards to assist with your Rotary Club environmental stewardship project. When done, this will be a prideful project and gift that will be treasured by the City of Albion and its residents. To insure these gains are sustained and allow for steady improvements, I suggest that you make this an annual event.

Warm regards,

Mike Stout  
President and Founder, Michigan Waterways Stewards  
[Love Our Waterways - It's A Shared Responsibility.](#)