

The background is a stylized, abstract landscape. It features a blue sky with white, cloud-like patterns. In the foreground, there are rolling hills or a field with a mix of brown, green, and blue tones, suggesting vegetation or water. Several dark blue birds are shown in flight against the sky. The overall style is graphic and artistic.

# IMPACT

Conservation Resource Alliance Report To Contributors 2007 - 2008



Antrim,  
Benzie,  
Charlevoix,  
Emmet,  
Grand Traverse,  
Kalkaska,  
Lake,  
Leelanau,  
Manistee,  
Mason,  
Missaukee,  
Newaygo,  
Oceana,  
Osceola,  
and Wexford  
Counties

# Sowing Seeds

In 1968 Traverse City was a community with lumber camp and saw mill roots in the heart of a region ripe for growth and development. The Conservation Resource Alliance (CRA) was established there that year as the Northwest Michigan Resource Conservation & Development Council, a local extension of the federal Natural Resources Conservation Service. CRA evolved into a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization to serve the local needs of our region's rich cold-water streams, diverse wildlife, and bountiful landscapes. The stage was set for the important work we have carried out across northwest Lower Michigan for over 40 years now.

## The Root of the Problem

The very geological conditions making the region capable of producing seemingly endless timber resources and world-class trout streams became the very source of the streams' ubiquitous pollutant: sand. High banks were turned into "roll ways" where decked logs were rolled down into the river in

the spring when the rivers were running their highest. The logs dragged and gouged out the protective vegetation and topsoil, leaving raw and blown out banks in their wake.

Fast forward to the near present, where sandy two tracks, gravel roads, and paved roads with erodible shoulders cross these same river systems. Commercial and residential riparian development paid little regard to maintaining native streamside vegetation. The net effect that all of these things have on the habitat in the streams is the smothering of the essential gravel, cobble, and woody debris that provide habitat for both the food that fish eat, insects, and the spawning areas for the fish themselves.

Addressing over a century of ecological impacts is a big job. We'll keep working hard to protect the future of northern Michigan. Perhaps more than ever, we understand how the fabric of our communities is interwoven with the natural beauty and economic value of these resources. With your support, your passion, we are making a difference.

# CRA





## Getting Dirty

CRA developed the River Care program with an eye toward a coordinated, partnership, and science based process. Expensive stream bank stabilization and road/stream crossing projects are tackled and repaired on a watershed scale throughout the region. Practical conservation practices married to a diversity of funding is the formula CRA and local partners use to complete over 50 projects every year. CRA's Board of Directors, staff, contributing members, agency and community partners all work together to do the heavy lifting that this level of impact requires. Conservation leadership combined with on-the-ground action. We have strived to remain agile, ears to the ground, responding to the highest priorities as quickly as possible. This strategy has led CRA to take a leadership role in the care and protection of over a dozen high quality watersheds. That's over 700 miles of river, another 5,000 miles of tributaries nurturing these rivers, and four million acres of forestland shaping these watersheds.

*CRA relies on trusted contractors to get big projects like the Dair Creek restoration done.*



Before



After

## Over the River

CRA has been working hard to restore the Green River, the largest tributary to the Jordan River, a state designated Natural River and Blue Ribbon Trout Stream. Step by step, one big project at a time, problems on the Green have been addressed. A beautiful river with excellent water quality, winding through a heavily forested corridor, the stream has had some problems.

In 2008 CRA worked with local partners to replace three old, corroded culverts on Green River Road with a new timber deck bridge with concrete abutments on spread footings to accommodate the artesian springs found at this site. The new bridge allows for a natural stream bottom and completely reconnects the upstream and downstream portions of the Green River.

Add this project to the completed removal of the dam at the Green River trout farm and the new timber deck bridge just downstream on Pinney Bridge Road and the Green is looking good and running free!

# Fragile



# Healing the Bear

CRA has a long established history of working with private landowners like Greg and Donna Nummerdor. The conservation-minded Nummerdors own property on Bear Creek which they diligently manage to benefit a wide variety of wildlife. CRA worked with the Bear Creek Watershed Council to complete the stabilization and enhancement of 320 lineal feet of their deteriorating streambank. Utilizing strategic large woody debris placement, log revetments, and native tree and shrub plantings, it has been calculated that 270 tons of sediment per year are being prevented from washing into Bear Creek as a result.



*Keeping Bear Creek healthy provides the cold, clean water trout require to thrive.*



Before



After

## Keeping it Cool

Trout need clean, cold water. Dair Creek is the second largest tributary providing consistent cold water to the Betsie River; a State designated Natural River popular for salmon and steelhead fishing. Dair Creek is also a Designated Trout Stream that supports populations of brook and brown trout. In 1865, a dam, pond and sawmill were constructed near its confluence with the Betsie and part of the stream was re-routed to a man-made channel. The original dam burned and a concrete replacement failed, causing further damage to the creek. Outdated road crossings upstream and downstream of the dam were unable to handle stream flows creating major erosion problems. Talk about a mess!

With the help of the landowners and many partners, CRA coordinated a multi-phased project removing the dam remnants, restoring the original stream channel, and improving three nearby road crossings. Fish passage has been opened to eight miles of prime stream habitat on Dair Creek. An estimated 75 tons of sediment will be prevented from washing into the stream annually!





## Running Free

It's an old story. The actions of the past result in problems in the future. People have always tried to harness moving water to do the work of today with less understanding or care about the impacts for tomorrow. CRA is answering the call to assist with how to deal with historic dam structures throughout our region. Solutions have to be smart and holistic, sensitive to the many dynamics important to each watershed.

Our last Impact report listed a number of dam removal projects underway on the Green River, Manton Creek, Wheeler Creek, Dair Creek, and the Boardman River. Some of these sites have already been resolved with free flowing outcomes that open fish passage while reducing risks for catastrophic failures. Just prior to the date of this report being published, CRA was chosen to lead the Boardman Dams Implementation Team through the steps necessary to remove three of the four dams in the watershed. This project is seen as one of the most significant whole watershed, multiple dam removal projects in the country.

*Historic dams create fish passage and habitat problems. Recapturing free flowing streams often require complex solutions.*



## Opportunity Knocks

CRA supporting members come from many different geographical, philosophical, and political points. What we share is a love of northern Michigan. We don't take for granted the beauty and possibilities that lie right outside our back doors. As optimism increases, so does involvement and generosity. Our strength comes from people who care and who give. Every gift CRA receives helps strengthen our effort to heal and care for wonderful, rejuvenating places. Please consider the opportunities to be part of our efforts as a supporting member.



*CRA members and volunteers make a difference with their support and time.*

# Peaceful



# Going Wild

Moving water to moving wildlife. Where River Care leaves off at the water's edge, Wild Link picks up on the ground. From the largest carnivore to the smallest herbivore, wild animals need to range. Vast tracts of forest, pastoral patchworks of meadow and swamp, and dark, brooding ranges of hills all contribute to the dramatic landscapes that support wildlife and attract thousands of visitors and new homebuilders every year. As the region becomes fragmented by development, corridors of habitat are essential to provide the links between large tracts of intact land.

Wild Link provides the wildlife of northwest Lower Michigan the habitat it requires for cover, travel, predating, foraging, and reproduction. While there are large tracts of public land available to wildlife, private landowners hold the ultimate key for diverse and healthy populations. Without their help, wildlife can be isolated where public and private lands are interspersed. We also rely on the help of our local land conservancies, state, federal and tribal agencies, and small businesses, which all help us to help landowners.

Recognizing that every landowner isn't a trained biologist or ecologist, CRA has developed Wild Link to help landowners make conservation choices that benefit a broad spectrum of plants and wildlife. Wild Link is a measured, thoughtful, and science-based process that's never pushy, and is easy to understand. Since the first habitat project just a few years ago, Wild Link has connected with fifty landowners along critical wildlife corridors. These connections have borne fruit with over sixty habitat improvement projects completed on roughly 9,400 acres.





## Reaping the Harvest

Tom Waurzyniak is a man with a passion for his land. Walk with him on his 47 acre southeast Grand Traverse County property and you'll quickly realize that he's a man with a plan. Food plots, timber management, brush piles, and planting native shrubs are just a few of the projects his family is doing to help manage for healthy and diverse wildlife populations.

As a participating landowner in CRA's Wild Link expansion in the Grand Traverse Region, the Waurzyniaks exemplify the excitement that is growing for this program. Tom is following his Wild Link plan through implementation to ensure that his property will offer his children and grandchildren even better opportunities for hunting and recreation while enhancing habitat for many wildlife and plant species. Neighbor to neighbor, Wild Link can connect ecological corridors for wildlife and for communities.

*Wild Link connects people and land. CRA is working with landowners, conservancies, and visionary funders to protect and manage vital wildlife habitat.*

# Moving





# Community

Realizing our conservation goals for healthy watersheds and wildlife habitat is only possible when we create a culture of stewardship by forging relationships with local people and businesses. Throughout our region are inspiring examples of involvement by folks from many diverse organizations, all willing to work together for a common cause.

CRA is proud of our associations with a long list of partners, without whom our impact would be significantly less. One of those that stand out for their investment in CRA's real work, collaborative approach, is DTE Energy.



In addition to generous financial support, they have offered leadership and outreach. CRA was honored to be a finalist in the 2008 Achieving Excellence Awards and to be chosen as DTE's community partner, showcased through an animated float in the National Cherry Festival's Cherry Royale Parade.

Our friends understand the urgent need for a stronger northern Michigan with defining characteristics rooted in nature, sensible land use, and sustaining economies. Willing to mobilize money and manpower, people who care make a difference!

*CRA projects and events draw passionate supporters who care about the future of northern Michigan. Our Greens Fore Streams golf outing has generated nearly \$140,000 since 2004.*

*Left: Pat Kelly presents the late Duke Domke of the MDEQ with CRA's Outstanding Agency Partner award for his years of professional commitment protecting the State's natural resources.*

# Strong



# The Sum of the Parts

CRA rolled out an updated Strategic Business Plan beginning in 2009 that integrates our aggressive mission with the current economic realities. The organization's "engine" runs on good science, common ground, and most of all, common sense.

Where will the next few years take us? Our Plan suggests more of the aggressive growth and business excellence that have made CRA successful to date. CRA's Board is prepared to embrace the next few years as a time of unprecedented challenge and opportunity. Our long-term financial strategy centers around purposefully increasing private revenue streams while we continue to rely on a consistent array of government funds. Funding needs are increasing much more rapidly than government funding can meet, and the "difference" will need to be funded by private and local community sources.

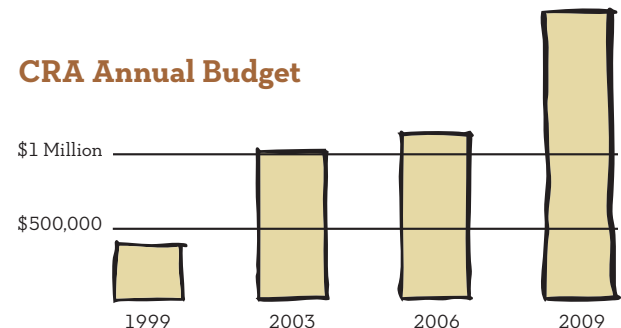
To accomplish this we must draw closer to donors, shift a portion of management resources to focus on government funding opportunities in the short term, adopt key fundraising benchmarks to ensure accountability and better understand our capacity for revenue generation.

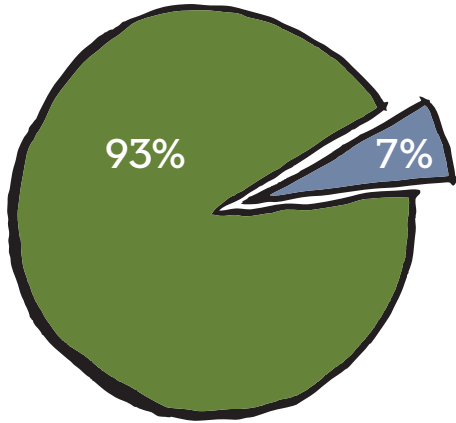
## Measurable Impacts

Here are examples of CRA's accomplishments in 2007 and 2008:

- Completed 85 individual projects benefiting rivers and watersheds - enhancing stream habitat, replacing degraded culverts and bridges, removing dams, and improving recreational access.
- Collaborated with landowners and regional land conservancies by completing 30 on-the-ground projects and management plans while continuing the strategic expansion of the Wild Link Program in the Grand Traverse region.
- Improved the health of 15 watersheds in 13 counties.
- Mobilized nearly \$3 million for conservation to benefit northern Michigan communities.
- Increased support from individual members by 11%.

**CRA Annual Budget**





### Expenses

2007 Total \$1,200,000

2008 Total \$1,360,000

- 93% Waterways, Wildlife & Forest Projects
- 7% Operations, Administration & Fundraising

### River Care Permanent Fund

A sustaining promise

\$655,642 balance as of 12/31/08

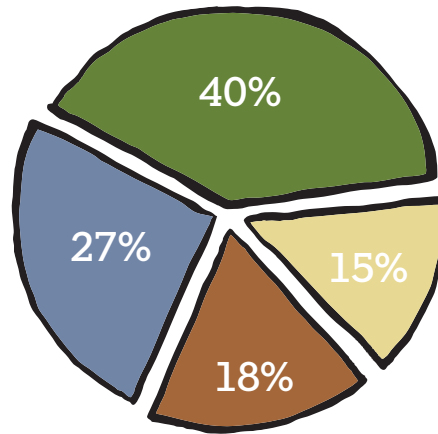
### CRA's Financial Team:

Mark Hepler - Board Treasurer

Dick Redmond - Board Finance Committee

Glenn Hirt - Investment Advisor, Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC

Diane VanderVeen - Contract CFO



### Support

2007 Total \$1,311,000

2008 Total \$991,000

- 40% Federal Grants and Contracts
- 27% State & Local Grants and Contracts
- 18% Membership, Contributions and Other Support
- 15% River Care Working Fund and Wild Link Support

CRA's open-books financial policy means that all information is available to contributors and partners. Feel free to request a copy of these resources from CRA's office: Audit reports and Financial Statements, Annual Workplans, Investment Policies, and River Care Fund and Program Guidelines.

# Solid





## Around the Bend

CRA is committed to a Strategic Plan that presents a roadmap to achieving the goals and aspirations shared by our many conservation partners. We are preparing for significant increases in the scope and impact of river restoration work. We believe that if we heal and care for rivers, they will provide for us. Good quality habitat will support “free fish” and other critical life systems, as well as the type of economy Michigan desires.

We need increased emphasis on protecting important ecological corridors as land is divided and developed at a rapid pace. Our goal is to be pro-active and salvage important connecting corridors before they are lost to development.

Finally, we’re working to expand our private partnerships for funding, volunteerism, and stewardship. Each new supporter finds a positive way to give back to northern Michigan through CRA’s conservation programs. Committed people make our big dreams come true. We need your support.

# Quiet



## Our Staff

**Amy Beyer**-Director, **Kimberly Balke**-Biologist, **Nate Winkler**-Biologist, **Chris Pierce**-Biologist, **Eric Ellis**-Biologist, **Matt Thomas**-Development Coordinator, **Jill Rowley**-Administrative Assistant, **Sue Peck**-Bookkeeper, **Diane VanderVeen**-Chief Financial Officer



## CRA Board of Directors



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Chairman  
*President, Hubbell  
Law Office*



**Dr. Pat Kelly**  
Vice Chairman  
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UGL Equis, Chicago*

Conservation Resource Alliance  
10850 Traverse Highway  
Suite 1111  
Traverse City, MI 49684

Phone: (231) 946-6817  
Fax: (231) 947-5441  
Email: [info@rivercare.org](mailto:info@rivercare.org)

For more information about CRA  
and our programs, please visit:  
**[www.rivercare.org](http://www.rivercare.org)**

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Conservation  
Resource Alliance

COORDINATING SENSIBLE  
STEWARDSHIP OF THE LAND