



The man of wisdom delights in water....

– *Confucius*

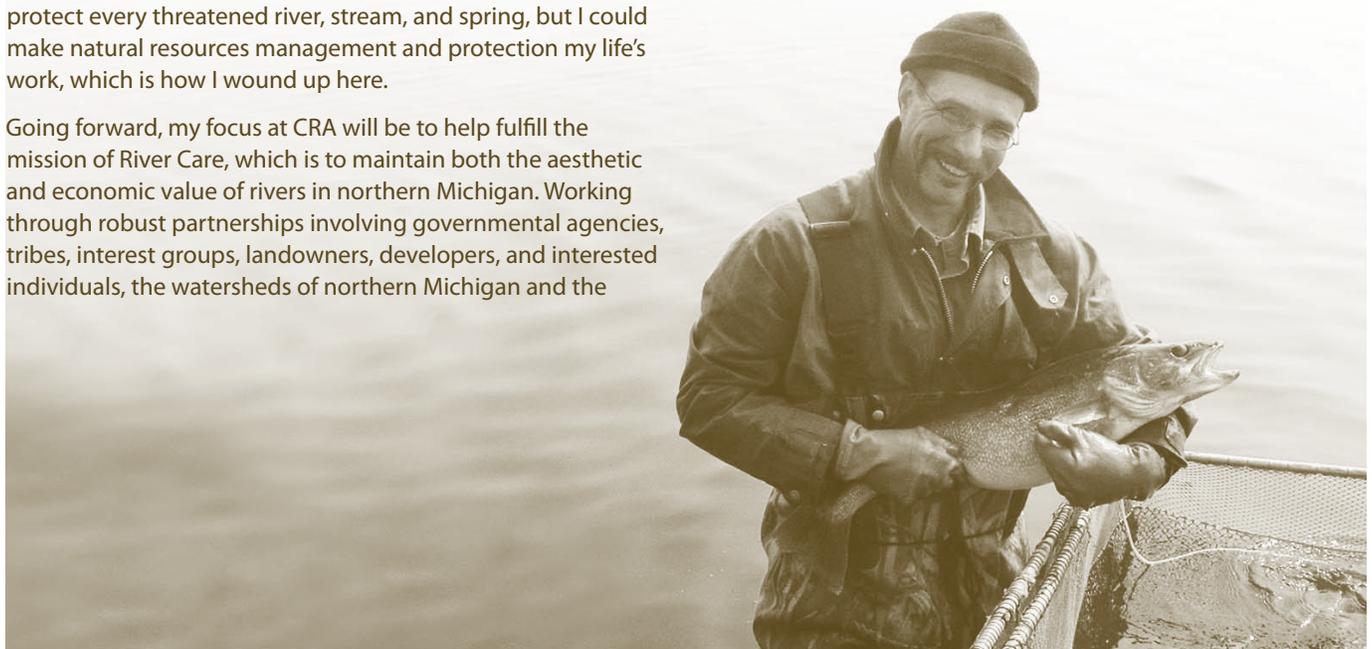
Greetings. My name is Nate Winkler and I am the new River Care biologist at CRA. It is through great fortune on my part that I've been chosen to join an experienced staff of biologists dedicated to protecting and restoring the rivers that nurtured me as a youngster. It might have been the springtime streams emanating from underneath snow banks on the shoulder of the road, or it could have been wading around in Otter Creek where it slid across the hot beach, its warm flow disappearing into a chilly Lake Michigan. Or it might have been playing in a hundred other rivulets, freshets, lakes, and mud puddles I invariably went over my boot tops in that stirred my affection for all things water. It was no great surprise to me that my life going forward would be inexorably tied to it and that the early years spent getting my socks wet would be the genesis for a career as a scientist, helping to manage and protect rivers and the land surrounding them.

You are likely reading this newsletter because at some point in your life, you were brought under the influence of water as I was. It became apparent as I got older that I needed to play a part in the protection of the natural resources that were my inspiration and *raison d'être*. It occurred to me pretty early on that I would never have the money it would take to buy and protect every threatened river, stream, and spring, but I could make natural resources management and protection my life's work, which is how I wound up here.

Going forward, my focus at CRA will be to help fulfill the mission of River Care, which is to maintain both the aesthetic and economic value of rivers in northern Michigan. Working through robust partnerships involving governmental agencies, tribes, interest groups, landowners, developers, and interested individuals, the watersheds of northern Michigan and the

rivers they sustain can be protected for the future benefit of both people and wildlife. The ubiquitous pollutant that is the primary focus of this effort is sediment. The same geologic processes that made conditions perfect in northern Michigan for clear, cold, and stable flowing rivers, also produced the primary source of pollution for these same rivers. While a measure of sediment entering rivers is a natural and essential process, the excessive sedimentation resulting from historic log drives, residential and commercial development, and road/stream crossings is a case of too much of a good thing. Along with myriad other damaging effects, too much sediment in a river can smother the gravels essential for insect habitat and fish spawning, and causes the stream to shallow up and become warmer than normal. By inventorying and prioritizing sites that produce high amounts of sediment, and subsequently coordinating the funding, design, and construction of best management practices, CRA serves as an organizational keystone, bringing and holding it all together.

While attitudes and opinions vary widely among folks, I think everyone can agree that clean water and healthy rivers are an important part of all of our lives.





With Boardman Pond being drawn down 15 feet we see the uncovered habitat as sediment that has accumulated over the years. Repairing and operating the dam once again will simply cover that sediment back up with water, leaving an underwater desert that supported a meager warm water fishery to begin with. A fast-flowing, coldwater stream rich with woody debris and gravel beds that would flow through the 100 acre impoundment area would be more productive for fish, wildlife, aquatic insects, and plant life.

Those Darn Dams

CRA has been involved in the Boardman River Dams Committee since its inception 3 years ago. CRA provided \$75,000 in grant funds from USFWS and MDNR towards the feasibility study on the Boardman Dams, and \$35,000 in match. The BRDC was unable to reach consensus last December on a single recommendation regarding the fate of the dams. Traverse City and Grand Traverse County Commissioners are now working with a consultant to further explore the realities of potential hydropower. With the results of that task upcoming, a final decision is imminent.

The dam removals that CRA has participated in to date are of a smaller magnitude than the Boardman, however the nuts and bolts of each situation remains - owners are faced with outdated structures in need of significant, costly repairs and do not wish to maintain liability for the structure and its adverse affects if problems or failures occur. Add in the fact that the dams are located on high quality streams and the pros of dam removal outweigh the cons in a society where we are more actively managing our waterways than we were a hundred years ago.

Iron Ore Creek

Beaver Island's lone trout stream, Iron Ore Creek, will soon be getting some much needed attention. CRA and the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians are currently writing a proposal to the US Fish and Wildlife Service to replace the undersized and perched culverts at the West Side Road crossing. In addition, the proposal seeks funds for assessing the brook trout population of the stream. The proposed new structure, a recessed elliptical culvert, will allow fish passage between the big lake and the upper reaches of the stream. Stay tuned!

Even if the best case scenario prevails for managing all the logistics in relicensing an outdated dam (which can take 3-5 years and cost up to \$750,000 per dam with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission) and bringing it into compliance, the Boardman is still a "medium-sized" river. The Boardman River has 20% of the water or less than major rivers like the Manistee and Muskegon where hydropower is deemed financially feasible.

The Boardman River is currently considered one of the top ten trout streams in Michigan, and that is with the dams in place. Imagine how valuable it could be as a free flowing river, with the exception of Union Street Dam for lamprey control. For those not particularly interested in trout, consider fish as indicators of how healthy a river is. Brook trout have especially high habitat standards, requiring cold water, forested corridors, and insect life to flourish – if they thrive in a river so will a wealth of other birds, amphibians, mammals, and reptiles. In 2003, the brook trout population was 12 times higher above Brown Bridge Pond than below the dam.

The Boardman River has been altered for over 100 years – possibly removing some of the dams will create a tremendous, positive, lasting effect on a river system that will outlast us all.



Manton Millpond Update

CRA, MDNR Fisheries, MDEQ, City of Manton, and other partners have been actively working together to address the Manton Millpond Dam Issues and Recreation Development of the park. Last October, the Manton City Commission adopted a resolution in support of removal of the Millpond Dam allowing for Manton (Cedar) Creek to return to a natural channel while maintaining the Millpond as an independent fishing and recreation pond. CRA is actively pursuing funds to start final design engineering and implementation of the total project. Other exciting goals of the project include: parking lot, trail, and fishing access improvements, interpretive signs, and scenic viewing and picnic areas.



Current Photo as of 2007



Photo-Enhanced Concept. "Restored" Millpond and Rapids



Pine Sand Trap

Knoop Excavating took advantage of the small break in weather northern Michigan experienced early in February and cleaned out the McCarthy Sand Trap. The trap was nearly full of sand and needs to be monitored after high water events to ensure proper function. Many partners have contributed to the "clean-outs" removing up to 600 cubic yards annually. This spring CRA and partners are looking to help improve the pad where the heavy equipment needs to access the trap.

Good News for Great Rivers!

CRA was notified recently that a second phase of Conservation Innovation Grant funding has been awarded to extend habitat improvement work in northwest Michigan. Since 2006, conservation partners have been working on the first phase, a 3-year, \$500,000 grant project that concentrates habitat improvement in the critical river and wildlife habitat corridors of northwest Michigan. The project was designed to demonstrate how conservation benefits can be targeted for maximum impact, focusing on waterways and habitat connections that are important to tribes and many other conservation partners in our region. Wildlife habitat plans and projects have been carried out on private and tribal lands, in some cases stimulating permanent land protection projects. Culturally significant plants and habitats have been integrated into the Wild Link approach, dams have been removed, stream crossings and public access sites improved, and fisheries habitat has been restored. The second grant, also for \$500,000 and another 3 years, will let us expand and extend the habitat improvement work.

The Phase 2 grant gives us a great opportunity to continue our locally-driven efforts so that the funding can do the most possible good. Together, the two grants total \$1 million and will leverage more than \$1.1 million in State, local, and private support. CRA's Director, Amy Beyer, says, "We need to recognize that the funding for this initiative was competitive nation Service to invest in our Wild Link/River Care model is an important clue that high-quality natural resources are a priority in the Great Lakes and in the United States." That is good news for great rivers!

Thank you for your recent support of CRA, River Care™ and Wild Link™

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Richard & Carol Streit
In honor of Japhet, Ethan,
Mary Jane & Douglas Hoff
Annie Hoff

Chainsaws Benefit Wildlife

It's true. Winter is the time of year when CRA biologists get the chainsaws out to benefit wildlife. This winter the Wild Link program helped two landowners regenerate Early Successional Forest Habitat (ESFH) by clearing two aging Bigtooth Aspen stands. ESFH habitat is vital to the survival and reproduction of many species of wildlife including numerous neo-tropical songbirds (such as the Chestnut-sided warbler) and the American woodcock. By regenerating these stands thick new aspen growth will take the place of large overstory aspen nearing the end of their life cycle. This will ensure that this habitat type is maintained into the future since aging aspen stands that are not cut are inevitably taken over by shade tolerant species such as maples.



Ready For Spring?

We are northern Michigan people. Hardy, durable, strong. The seasons represent cycles of life and renewal for us. Most of us even say we love the winter. But this year the Old Man has really hammered us. Even the die hard snow and cold lovers felt the bite of our five month white season. Fear not. CRA is ready to offer the antidote and hope that fun in the sun is just around the corner. It's Greens Fore Streams time again!

What started out as a bit of an experiment in friend and fund raising, is now a much anticipated golf event in its sixth year that has generated over \$100,000. So get a team together, sponsor a hole, donate some swag, and come be part of the fun on Wednesday May 27, 2009. Once again, we'll play a scramble format on the beautiful Mountain Ridge course at Crystal Mountain. Scientific Anglers-3M will return as our generous title sponsor. Golfer registration is still \$100 per person, \$400 for a foursome team and includes the 18-hole of golf, cart, contests, snack lunch, reception, and buffet dinner. Bob Garner will again emcee the ceremonies and auction. Get signed up by returning the registration form in the Greens Fore Streams mailer coming soon or by giving us a call at 231-946-6817 to register a team, individual golfers, become a hole sponsor, or to donate prizes. We need your help and participation. See you on the links!

Yes! I Want to Support CRA & Practical Conservation!

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Thank You For Your Support!

CRA Supporters Dig Deep

The end of the year is the traditional season for annual membership and fund drives. It's a good time for folks to take stock, sort out what organizations mean the most to them, do last minute tax planning, and write some checks to help out your favorite cause. Most of us have heard too often in recent months what difficult times it is for non-profit groups trying to raise funds for programs as well as general support. There is a lot at stake if the very important support from private individuals, businesses, and foundations is significantly reduced. In addition to the real dollar loss from this revenue stream diminishing, these contributions are what allow larger grant funding to be put to use because of the necessary local match that often is required.

The many friends of CRA, old and new, have accepted the challenge of these economic times. We were able to close out 2008 with slightly increased giving from memberships and annual gifts. That in turn, has helped CRA remain very competitive in the program grant arena by being able to show that match needed for those grants and contracts could be delivered. We owe a huge THANK YOU to everyone that is helping make this happen. Your support is critically important now more than ever. To keep ahead of the hazards of a difficult economy, we need your continued commitment to keep northern Michigan spectacular. So the challenge for all of us is to keep our priorities focused and the passion for our "up north" strong. CRA is determined to fulfill our mission and promise to do our part to protect these special places. Please help our rivers, forests, and wildlife by making or renewing your tax-deductible gift to the Conservation Resource Alliance. Thank you!

We Want More Trees!

Many landowners are blessed with an abundance of oak trees on their property. Others are not so blessed and need to treat all the oaks they have with special care to ensure their health and a nice crop of acorns for wildlife. Wild Link helps these landowners by identifying the oaks on their property, marking competing trees, and cutting or girdling the competitors. This winter CRA assisted four landowners to open up their "crop" oak trees. The competing trees do not go to waste and are either used for firewood, girdled to create standing dead trees for wildlife habitat, milled for lumber, or allowed to slowly decompose and add natural fertilizer to the forest floor around the oaks. In the coming years the oaks will expand their canopies and produce larger acorn crops which will be much appreciated by many game and non-game species of wildlife.





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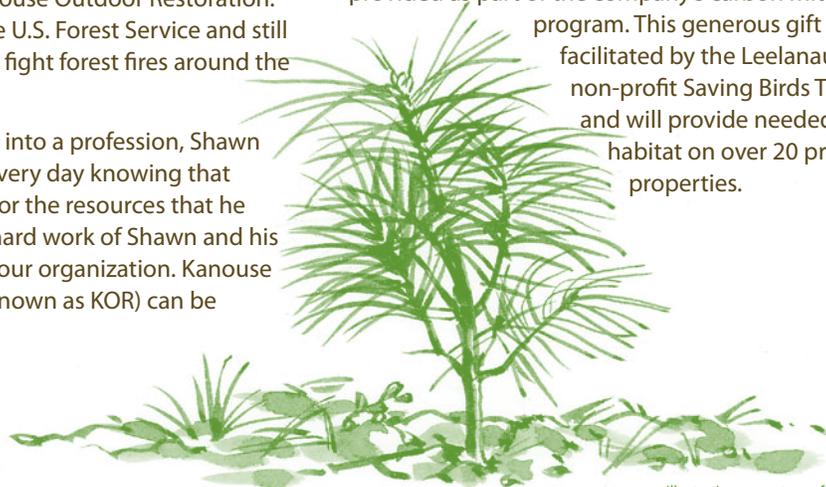
Stewardship Spotlight Kanouse Outdoor Restoration

Although the CRA team and many volunteers that help out on over a dozen watersheds are a hard working bunch, there is just no way we can get the job done without highly competent contractors. One of the best is Shawn Kanouse. He's been helping out CRA and similar groups across west Michigan since 2001 by offering services like fisheries enhancement, wildlife improvement, erosion control, and trail construction through his firm, Kanouse Outdoor Restoration. Prior to that, Shawn worked for the U.S. Forest Service and still contracts with that agency to help fight forest fires around the country as needed.

Turning a passion for the outdoors into a profession, Shawn finds it pretty easy to go to work every day knowing that he'll be able to make a difference for the resources that he cares about. CRA appreciates the hard work of Shawn and his crew and his generous support of our organization. Kanouse Outdoor Restoration (soon to be known as KOR) can be reached at (231)499-4819.

Free Trees for Wildlife

This spring CRA's Wild Link program will be distributing 5000 free trees and shrubs to Wild Link landowners and other private property owners along regional wildlife corridors. The trees for this project were purchased with funds provided by Wexford Sand Company, a division of Fairmount Minerals. Fairmount Minerals, Ltd. is an international sand mining company that is dedicated to sustainable development practices. The species being distributed are all native to Michigan and are being provided as part of the company's carbon mitigation program. This generous gift is being facilitated by the Leelanau County non-profit Saving Birds Thru Habitat and will provide needed wildlife habitat on over 20 private properties.



Illustrations courtesy of JeniferThomasDesign.com