



The Plight of the Naked River

by Kimberly Balke, CRA Biologist

Trees. Is there anything in nature more useful than a tree? Whether it's alive or dead, a tree is a great thing. Most of our rivers and creeks begin in the trees, flowing through forests, picking up leaf litter, pine needles, cones, branches and fallen trees as they go. Those tree branches and trunks and root wads – that is what makes up the woody debris that our streams require to be healthy.

I stood on the banks of the Pere Marquette this summer, just outside of Baldwin and thought to myself, "How beautiful but where the heck is all the woody debris?" The river looked, well, naked. Many people may see a floating branch or submerged tree as an annoyance, but in fact they are pretty important for the following reasons:

Home - Net spinning caddis flies use driftwood to attach their nets for catching food. Case making caddis flies attach themselves to wood and rocks, making protective cases of sticks, gravel and sand around their bodies. A rough piece of wood with feeding grooves from a riffle beetle will support more animal and plant life than wood with a smooth surface.

Food - Algae, moss, fungi and microscopic organisms that grow on wood provide food for bugs like caddis flies, mayflies, stoneflies and snails which then provide food for fish, frogs, salamanders, turtles, crayfish and other wildlife.

Protector - Large woody debris creates protected areas for fish during high water and extreme seasonal temperatures. Young trout use wood as escape cover from bigger fish, and the big fish use wood to hide from anglers.

Designer - Fallen trees create new habitats, making a river more complex. A piece of wood can deflect the current away from a sensitive bank or it can scour out a nice, deep hole. The energy of flowing water is continually dissipated by driftwood in the channel, slowing erosion and collecting leaves and other organic debris that provide food for bugs.

Transportation - Insects attached to woody debris can make their way down the river, spreading food opportunities throughout the stream.

Rest Stop - Turtles and snakes use wood in the river for resting and basking spots. Mink, otter, muskrat, raccoon - a log in the stream is a spot to stop and eat a snack. I snuck up on an otter on the Betsie this fall; he scurried across a log in the river before diving into the stream. Stoneflies, some mayflies and dragonflies use driftwood to crawl out of the water so they can emerge as terrestrial adults.

Some of you reading this newsletter may say, "Hey CRA, if fallen trees are so important then let the rivers move and the banks cave in as they please – stop stabilizing them!" That is not so simple. One reason is that landowners will rarely stand by and watch banks erode into the river losing land as they go. The more important reason is that we now manage our rivers for fish that thrive in cold water, spawn on gravel, and eat aquatic insects. A river laden with sand will eventually be shallow, wide, and warm with deep holes filled in, and gravel and woody debris buried. For those of you who don't fish, value the trout and aquatic insect as indicators of how healthy our rivers are. The now extinct arctic grayling that used to inhabit our streams also had high standards, requiring cold water and insect life to flourish. *(Continued on page three)*



Here's What's Happening...



CIG Update

A successful proposal written by CRA in 2005 resulted in a \$500,000 grant from USDA's Conservation Innovation Grant program for "Northern Michigan Wild Link – An Innovative Tribal Partnership for Regional Habitat Conservation". Halfway through this project, we are convinced it is providing an important example of effective, streamlined delivery of Farm Bill-type services in a rural region. The goal of this project is to demonstrate a unique, efficient approach for conservation of natural resources of importance to northern Michigan tribes and communities, including water, fisheries, wildlife, and forests. To date, \$150,000 of grant funds have been spent, and over \$400,000 in non-federal funds has been leveraged. An additional \$200,000 in grant funds has been tentatively committed for implementation of upcoming habitat improvement projects of priority to the tribes and the region.



Planning for the Future

What better way to celebrate forty years of conservation work in northern Michigan than rolling out a campaign to make sure that CRA's mission carries on for generations. The Permanent Fund was established to ensure that the "nothing lasts forever" mindset would not apply to the pristine resources of northwest Michigan. CRA's Permanent Fund endowment offers a number of opportunities for ensuring that we'll be able to finish what we started four decades ago, and keep on caring for cold, clear rivers, and bountiful lands well into the future.

Recently, an anonymous donor that had fished virtually all of our great northern streams for seventy years, fulfilled a longtime dream of helping care for some of his favorite places forever. His generous gift to the Permanent Fund will support restoration and habitat improvement projects while challenging others to join CRA's 2008 campaign to raise the principle of this fund to over \$1 million. With less than \$250,000 needed to reach this important benchmark, we are very close to making sure that efforts to save these gems will continue for a very long time.

For more information about how you can help and to make a gift to CRA's Permanent Fund please contact Matt Thomas, CRA Development Coordinator at 231-946-6817 or just remit your contribution with an indication to direct it to the Permanent Fund. You can also make your donation online at the Join Us section of www.rivercare.org. With your help, some things can last forever!

Building Partnerships

CRA was recently awarded a \$150,000 Clean Michigan Initiative grant and a \$300,000 Federal Nonpoint Source grant from the MDEQ. Combined, these grants will:

- Enable the Land Conservancy of West Michigan to purchase development rights on almost 400 acres in the Pere Marquette River corridor.
- Enable CRA to update the watershed management plan to EPA standards, incorporating new field inventory data for almost the entire watershed into an online database system.

This is CRA's first partnership with LCWM and we are looking forward to working together!

The Big Sable Rolls Along

The Big Sable Watershed Restoration Group gathered early in 2007 to pursue restoring the severely eroding Pole Bridge site. Nearly 200 feet of eroding bank were re-sloped and repaired with rock and tree revetments and timber terraces were added to help access the waters for fishing and boating. A work bee is planned for spring to finish planting the banks with native grasses, trees, and shrubs to help further stabilization efforts and to improve habitat conditions for many species found in the Big Sable Watershed.



Making Connections

The Grand Traverse regional expansion of Wild Link is off and running. In the second half of the year we signed up our first three landowner participants in the region. These properties account for 390 acres of prime wildlife corridor habitat including three lakes, the headwaters of the Platte river, high quality northern hardwoods, open grasslands, an old growth hemlock stand, and cedar swamp habitat adjacent to the Pere Marquette State Forest. Management plans for these areas will be finished by early 2008 with on-the-ground habitat projects beginning next spring. CRA is excited to be assisting these landowners to achieve their wildlife habitat goals on their properties and looks forward to signing up many more people in 2008.



Welcome, Macy!

Chris Pierce, CRA Biologist, Clare and their son Riley, who is 2 ½, recently welcomed Macy Clare to their family. Macy was born August 30, weighed 6 lbs. 13 oz. and was 20 ½ inches long. Congratulations, Chris and Clare, on your beautiful baby girl!

Welcome, Ellie!

On November 19, CRA Biologist Mark Johnson and his wife Diana welcomed a beautiful baby girl into their family. Ellie Serena weighed 6 lbs. 14 oz. and was 18 inches long. She joins big sister Mackenna, who is 2 ½. The Johnsons are very happy and healthy.



The Plight of the Naked River (Continued from page one)

What can you do? If you see a fallen tree in the stream, don't take it out. What else can you do? Change your perspective. Sure, you might not want a dead tree lying on your lawn or near your home. But when you stand at the river's edge, you should want to see some trees that are laying in the river, interlaced into a nice log jam.

Every year CRA gets calls regarding trees that have fallen into the river. We work with contractors to move the woody debris around, often anchoring it along a streambank. When we place fieldstone on eroding banks, we look around for nearby trees to cut or have the contractor haul in trees from off-site to anchor into the base of the bank. On the Manistee River we've worked with the US Forest Service to helicopter in hundreds of trees over the last 7 years to drop along riverbanks, root wads and all. CRA likes the middle ground. We can navigate our streams and stabilize our banks, but we can also keep wood in them.

So the next time you are on a creek or river, pick up a water-logged branch. See what you can find crawling or growing on it. And when you're done, throw it back in. The river needs it.

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

Americana Foundation	Slagle Trout Club	Russ & Vivian Cecil	Tom Jobson	Kathleen Ryan & Paul Rutledge
Charlevoix County Community Foundation	Stromberg Carlson Products, Inc.	Robert & Diane Collier	Derrick Johnson	Dick & Pat Sanderson
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Mason County Fin and Feather Club	Ed Anderson	Kent H. Gage	Gary Marek	Karl VanNoord
MDEQ	William & Mary Arnold	William E. Garapick, Jr.	C.R. Martin	Jack Van Hoef
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Pere Marquette Watershed Council	Bill & Dorothy Bos	Michael & Chris Gravlín	Freida Newman	David Wilburn
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Rotary Charities of Traverse City	Jeff Breuker	Richard M. Hansen	Douglas Patulski	Robert & Sue Wilson
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		Glenn G. Jackson	Steven B. Robbins	
		Gary Jarrold	Elaine Rose	



The Simplest Act

If you are like me, you've accumulated a pile of requests from a ton of great organizations asking for your support. It's the end of year push for memberships, annual gifts, planned gifts, and special campaigns. For many of us, there are more worthy causes than our checkbooks can handle. So we stick with our favorites or the ones that catch our eye with a clever appeal. As the guy trying to come up with the magic message and perfect graphics each year, I understand the challenge of crafting a request that hopefully will end up close to the top of the consideration pile.

The Conservation Resource Alliance needs your help. It's really that simple. We all live, play, work, or visit in this beautiful corner of Michigan and it is our responsibility to care for our rivers, land, and wildlife. I believe that these gifts are what make this one of the most special places on the planet. If each one of us can find a way to help care for them, they will be enjoyed for many years to come. The simplest act to accomplish this is to support the good organizations that have strong and successful missions to restore and protect our natural resources. I hope that you consider CRA one of those groups and make a tax-deductible gift to CRA this month and in the upcoming year. Your contribution will go to work making a difference for the places that we all want our children and grandchildren to experience.

You can use the contribution form in this newsletter, give online at www.rivercare.org, or call your gift information in to us at 231-946-6817. We would also like to discuss helping you make CRA a part of your estate and planned giving considerations. Please contact us for more information. Thank you!

Matt Thomas, CRA Development Coordinator

Yes! I Want to Support CRA & Practical Conservation!

Enclosed is my CRA Membership contribution:

- Contributor \$30 Supporter \$50 Sponsor \$100
 Benefactor \$500 Patron \$1000 Other \$_____
- Business Membership: Small \$100 Large \$500
Special recognition and employee benefits available
- My employer will match my gift (please send forms)
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 Send Free T-Shirt, Size: S M L XL XXL

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Credit card payments are also accepted at: www.rivercare.org
Your donation is tax-deductible. Make all checks payable to:
Conservation Resource Alliance
10850 Traverse Highway, Suite 1111, Traverse City, MI 49684

Thank You For Your Support!



The Shirt Off Our Back!

Well, not exactly off our back, but hot off the press. CRA is proud to offer another original Richard Forrest artwork T-shirt for all supporting members or as a great gift idea. Richard always looks to his favorite stream, marsh, meadow, or forest for inspiration. This year, he has unearthed an exceptionally fun representation of salamanders crawling out to check the scene from the back of our high quality cotton T's. Please join or renew your CRA membership to get this new edition of what has become an entire collection of wearable art!



**Conservation
Resource Alliance**
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*Dennis Muchmore,
MUCC Executive Director,
represents a new strong
voice for conservation
in Michigan.*

*Ted Borgeld accepts
CRA's River Care Partner
of the Year award from
Board Vice Chairman,
Pat Kelly.*



Biennial Meeting a Partnership Event

Nothing reinforces the value of our conservation collaborations like gathering every two years for CRA's Biennial Meeting. Representation from watershed and interest groups, conservation and land protection organizations, and many of the agencies that we work closely with, filled the Hagerty Center with likeminded folks interested in sharing an opportunity to learn how we can all cooperate to get more done. Welcoming remarks by Michigan Trout Unlimited Chairman and CRA's newest Board member, Patrick Kochanny and a keynote address by recently appointed Michigan United Conservation Clubs executive director, Dennis Muchmore, emphasized the need for everyone to pull together for the future of Michigan's threatened resources.

CRA also recognized the extraordinary contributions of a few individuals that have really gone above and beyond doing their part to keep our region biologically healthy. Ray Bonter received the Wild Link Partner of the Year award for his commitment to habitat improvement planning and implementation on his land in Emmet County. Ted Borgeld was the recipient of the River Care Partner of the Year honor. He has filled leadership roles for many years, making sure that progress on the beautiful Pine River continues. Duke Domke, tireless and dedicated DEQ employee, was recognized as CRA's Agency Partner of the Year for his outstanding service and cooperation on so many of our projects.

CRA appreciates the support and confidence of all our friends and partners. We can't do it without working together!