**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Grand Rapids Public Museum Announces ‘Major Breakthrough’ in Grand River Sturgeon Reproduction Research**

**Partners include John Ball Zoo, Encompass Socio-Ecological Consulting, Grand Valley Metro Council, Grand Valley State University and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

**Grand Rapids, MI** - The Grand Rapids Public Museum (GRPM) announced today, their team of scientists and partnership researchers have documented natural reproduction of Lake Sturgeon in the Grand River for the first time. The sturgeon research team involving the GRPM along with partners, Encompass Socio-Ecological Consulting, John Ball Zoo, and Grand Valley State University captured and released a four-month-old Lake Sturgeon on September 8, 2022 as part of the Lake Sturgeon Juvenile Assessment work.

This research team has been working over the last 4 years to document young Lake Sturgeon in the Lower Grand River. The six-inch sturgeon that was captured indicates successful reproduction and recruitment into the Grand River population. This research project is led by the Grand Rapids Public Museum in partnership with Encompass Socio-Ecological Consulting, John Ball Zoo and Grand Valley State University. This year, a graduate student from Grand Valley State University, along with support from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, will allow for an additional habitat mapping component to the research.

“Documentation of a juvenile Lake Sturgeon here in the Grand River is a major breakthrough in our research,” said Dr. Stephanie Ogren, the GRPM’s VP of Science and Education. “It’s a rewarding experience to collaborate and share this experience with local partners while working on research projects that will help us better understand the dynamics of the Grand River. The Grand River is such an important resource and focal point within Grand Rapids, and it’s our goal to conserve and share it’s impact with the community.”

This research team is working to document young Lake Sturgeon in the Lower Grand River. Finding and documenting these fish indicates successful reproduction and recruitment into the Grand River population.

“The John Ball Zoo is committed to the conservation of the Grand River ecosystem and excited to be part of this dynamic partnership,” said Bill Flanagan, Conservation Manager for the John Ball Zoo. “ The discovery of a juvenile Lake Sturgeon is an exciting breakthrough in our work to ensure this iconic Great Lakes species thrives in Grand Rapids.”

“Unlike the other sturgeon populations in the Lake Michigan Basin, we know very little about the Grand River population,” said Dr. Marty Holtgren of Encompass Socio-Economical Consulting. “This dedicated partnership, along with finding a young sturgeon, represents an initial step in our learning of what needs to be done to protect and enhance this species for generations to come.”

“The GVSU Biology Department and Master of Science Program are so pleased to contribute to this important research. Finding a juvenile Lake Sturgeon—clear evidence of successful reproduction-–represents an important milestone as we work to recover this culturally important resource,” said Eric Snyder, Professor of Biology, GVSU.

**Additional Ongoing Research**

**Angler Counts**

The Grand Rapids Public Museum, Encompass Socio-ecological Consulting LLC, John Ball Zoo and the Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds are studying how the Grand River is used by anglers. The research will help document the long-term changes that occur when the city of Grand Rapids begins the river rehabilitation that will add two miles of rapid habitat throughout downtown Grand Rapids, as proposed by Grand Rapids White Water. The research uses a citizen science technique where professionals and the public work together to document the number of people fishing in the downtown area and the general locations of anglers. Citizen Science Training for Angler Counts takes place seasonally. To register for Citizen Science training please visit [grpm.org/citizenscience](https://www.grpm.org/citizenscience/).

**Fish Community Assessment**

This annual assessment of fish species will provide a baseline dataset of fish communities in the area of the proposed restoration project. Fish communities are counted through electrofishing surveys. It is a partnership between Grand Valley Metro Council, Grand Valley State University, Encompass Socio-Ecological Consulting and the GRPM. Multiple Grand Valley State University graduate students have worked on this important dataset.

**Macroinvertebrate Assessments**

Annual macroinvertebrate (aquatic insects) surveys are conducted near the Museum’s Spillman Carousel in the Grand River. This project has been completed in partnership with the Grand Rapids White Water Summer Science and Leadership program since 2019. The Museum is contributing to a large data collection effort, spearheaded by Grand Valley Metro Council with many partners.

**Grand River Habitat Mapping**

This year Grand Valley State University and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will add to the research being conducted on the Grand River by assisting in mapping the Lower Grand River and building a habitat suitability index for juvenile Lake Sturgeon.

The GRPM provides historical, cultural and scientific interpretation to the watershed including how human actions have affected and will continue to affect the future of natural and human systems.To tell the river restoration story, there are data and knowledge gaps that the Museum and partners are working to fill, including information about the historic and current fish community, how humans interact with the river, and how the restoration actions may change human behavior. The Museum and partner agencies have teamed up to answer some of these questions. The Museum’s research team is led by the GRPM’s scientists on staff, Dr. Stephanie Ogren, VP of Science and Education and Dr. Cory Redman, Science Curator.

For more information on the GRPM’s research projects, please visit grpm.org.

**Media interviews will be available upon request to meet with researchers on-site at the Grand River. Please contact** **kkocienski@grpm.org** **or** **lecceadone@seyferthpr.com** **to schedule.**

**Grand Rapids Public Museum**

The Grand Rapids Public Museum is an invaluable, publicly-owned institution that is home to more than 250,000 unique artifacts that tell the history of Kent County and beyond, houses the only planetarium in the region, and is responsible for protecting the Mounds, a national historic landmark. The Grand Rapids Public Museum is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, with its main location in downtown Grand Rapids, MI at 272 Pearl Street, NW. For additional information including hours of operation, admission fees and exhibit/event listings, please visit [www.grpm.org](http://www.grpm.org/).

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