Our History, Our Future

In 1889, Everette Fitch wrote the following entry in her diary regarding the Grand River: "The channel

was, as usual, covered with a green odiferous scum, mixed with oil from the gas works." Even more than a century ago the Grand River was deteriorating, its banks clogged with mills and factories and its water clogged with logs and dams. In its history the river has been abused with waterpower, river dependant industries, large increases in population, stripping of the forests, and discharges of chemical and sewage wastes. The prediction in 1905 by the *Grand Rapids Evening Press* was that by the year 2005 the Grand River would be more a sewer than a river.

Did you know that the Grand River was used to generate power for Grand Rapids' first furniture factory?

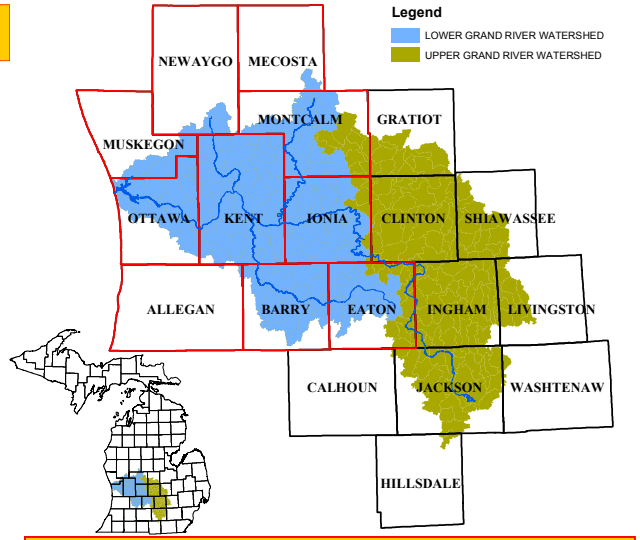
Today, that is not the case. Technology and knowledge have been used to improve water quality in the main channel. The success of the main channel needs to be repeated in the Grand River's tributaries, riparian corridors, and wetlands. The river is the main artery for the watershed, but without healthy tributaries the watershed can still deteriorate. If the Grand River is to be restored to what the *Grand River Times* in 1837 called "one of the most important and delightful [rivers] to be found in the country" with "clear, silver like water winding its way through a romantic valley" it is going to take even more hard work and dedication.

A watershed encompasses not only the river and its tributaries but also the land that is draining to these water bodies.

www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand

Our Lower Grand River Watershed

The Lower Grand River Watershed covers approximately 3,020 square miles in the southwest portion of the State of Michigan including significant portions of seven counties and small portions of three.



Another Example Of Our Success Over The Past

Did you know that the Rogue River, another tributary of the Grand River, used to run white with pollutants from paper mills and tanneries? Significant work was done with these point source pollutants and the river is again running clear. A 319 Nonpoint Source Management Plan, 319 Information and Education strategy, and a Clean Michigan Initiative grant to do physical repairs have been completed for the Rogue River. Local groups are now implementing measures to reduce nonpoint source pollutants, especially sediment and thermal loading. This will help to protect the trout fisheries and natural beauty of the river for future generations.

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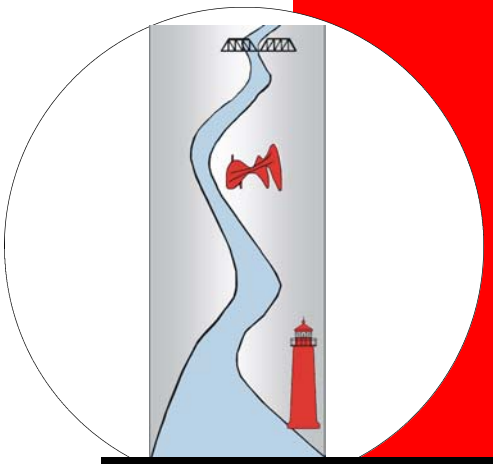

Lower Grand River Project

You may have seen the proposal, you may have heard the buzz, now you can find out what it is all about.

Grand Valley Metro Council

Grand Valley State University Annis Water Resources Institute

Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr & Huber, Inc.

www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand

Creating A Watershed Management Plan

While humankind has had an obvious and detrimental effect on the water quality of the Grand River, a great deal of improvement has been seen in the last 100 years. Why not build upon this success?

Why Create A Plan? *To identify the sources, threats, and causes of nonpoint source pollution and propose ways to prevent the pollutants from entering waterways.*

That is what a 319 Nonpoint Source Watershed Management Plan can do. Creating a management plan builds on the success of the past. The Lower Grand River Watershed has many small rivers and streams that have been studied, and some already have their own nonpoint source management plans. Now it is time to make one for the whole Lower Grand River watershed to help focus human, financial, and technical resources.

A nonpoint source plan can improve water quality, habitat quality, and the quality of life in human communities. This management plan will be focusing on **nonpoint source** pollutants such as sediment, thermal pollution, bacteria, and nutrients.

Point *source pollution includes direct municipal sewer and industrial discharges to a waterbody.*

www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand

Grand River Forum & Subcommittees

- **Grand River Forum :** A large diverse group of active participants meet quarterly to discuss the progress of the project.
- **Steering Committee:** Includes members whose expertise and background will provide leadership and direction for the project and subcommittees.

The following subcommittees have specific tasks:

- **Rural Subcommittee:** Conveys concerns to the Steering Committee that are unique to rural land uses and the relationship to water quality.
- **Urban Subcommittee:** Conveys concerns to the Steering Committee that are unique to urban, industrial, and commercial land uses and the relationship to water quality.

Did you know that the Grand River was once called "Owashtenong" (River from a far away place) by Native Americans?

- **Information and Education Subcommittee:** Identifies the target audiences in the Watershed at which to direct the project's messages, materials, and information as well as to plan for future outreach and education efforts.
- **Technical Subcommittee:** Includes experts in field inventories, engineering practices, and evaluation of Best Management Practices (BMPs) for urban and rural areas.
- **Sustainability Subcommittee:** Involves members that have diverse backgrounds and experiences to ensure the continuation of this plan and assist with the transition from the planning to the implementation stage of the project.

www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand

How To Get Involved

If you would like to join the Grand River Forum or one of the several subcommittees, please contact one of the individuals below.

Abigail Matzke
(616) 331-3994
matzkea@gvsu.edu

(616) 776-3876
planning@gvmc.org

Wendy Ogilvie
(616) 464-3915
ewogilvie@ftch.com

NO TIME? NO MONEY? Would you like to do something but have only limited resources? Here is a list of activities that you may be able to help with.

1. Do you have any completed reports or documents on water quality, planning, or research that may be of use to the project, if so contact one of the above individuals.
2. Check out the website to keep yourself informed of the projects happenings and watershed issues. www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand
3. Participate in watershed opportunities near you! Many times just a pair of hands on a week night or weekend are needed to complete water quality studies or river clean ups.

An Example Of Our Success Over The Past

Did you know that Indian Mill Creek, one of the Lower Grand River tributaries, used to run red with blood from a rendering plant? There was so much it actually raised the temperature of the creek enough to damage trout populations. Due to work done on preventing point source pollution the creek is now clear and cold again. Today it is being threatened by non-point source pollutants, sediment, and thermal loading from stormwater runoff. If these non-point source pollutants aren't taken care of, all of the hard work done before will be lost.

www.gvsu.edu/wri/isc/lowgrand