



THE RIVER GUARDIAN SPRING 2019

ARPOA BOARD: David Smith, President; Carol Vidrio, Treasurer; Judy Walle, Secretary & Newsletter Editor; Julie Gibbs, Web Director; Howard Johnson, Cedars for the Au Sable; Boyd Dillon, Steve Poulos, Greg Stansbury, Micki Levin.



From the Vice President Micki Levin

Greetings to all you Au Sable River lovers!

Our fearless leader, Dave Smith, is on a six-month hike of the Appalachian Trail so we are without his leadership this year. However, we have wonderful board members who are generous with their time and energy. We will plug along and move ahead on our mission.

Speaking of board members, there are two openings on our board. We welcome any interest in participating with us in serving the needs of Au Sable River property owners. If you are interested please contact me, Micki Levin. My contact information is 248-515-8489 or email me at mlevin@mickilevin.net.

Our annual meeting is in July again this year. If you have any suggestions for speakers or topics, please contact me. We always have a great turn out for this fun and informative event and I hope to see you all there.

See you on the river!

Micki

Congratulations to Joe Hemming, Fly Fisherman Magazine 2019 Conservationist of the Year!



On January 19, 2019, a ceremony was held at the Ralph A. MacMullen Conference Center in Roscommon, Michigan to honor Joe Hemming, former board member of ARPOA and President of Anglers of the Au Sable. The award was given to Joe by Ross Purnell, Publisher and Editor of the *Fly Fisherman*. As part of the award, Anglers of the Au Sable received a donation from Simms Fishing Products in the amount of \$10,000. Rich Hohne, Senior Director of Marketing and Brand Management of Simms was also present to deliver the check. By the end of that evening Joe's name became synonymous with "River Warrior."

Fish Farm Update Joe Hemming, President, Anglers of the Au Sable

Four years of legal fighting is over. The commercial fish farm that was being operated at the old Grayling fish hatchery is no more. How did this happen and what happens now?

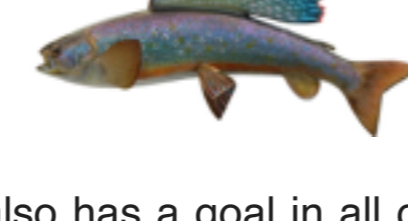
Last fall, Anglers of the Au Sable (Anglers) settled its lawsuit against Harrietta Hills Trout Farm, LLC and its operation of a commercial fish farm at the Grayling Hatchery. In addition, at the same time, Anglers dismissed its appeal of the decision by the DEQ Director to allow this commercial fish farm to operate. That decision by the DEQ Director had followed an 18-day administrative law hearing where Anglers had presented a number of experts who testified to the harm being caused to the river. As background, the DEQ, in issuing its permit at the Grayling Hatchery, would allow this commercial fish farm to be the largest fish farm in the state by allowing production of up to 300,000 pounds of fish. The permit also allowed the discharge by the fish farm of 1,600 pounds of phosphorus as well as almost 160,000 pounds of total suspended solids (consisting of fish feces and uneaten fish food) to be discharged every year into the Au Sable River. This discharge, among other harms to the river, allowed algae growth to increase in the river, allowed dissolved oxygen to decrease and dramatically increased the risk of whirling disease. In short, this permit to pollute posed the biggest threat to the Au Sable River in recent memory.



The settlement of both of these lawsuits came about through mediation that was conducted as part of the court process. Out of this court-ordered mediation emerged a settlement that was a classic win-win. Anglers paid the fish farm \$160,000 to cease operations and agree never again to conduct aquaculture operations in the Au Sable watershed. The Crawford County Board of Commissioners agreed to assign the 20-year lease previously given to Harrietta Hills to a new entity, Grayling Hatchery, Inc., which will now operate the hatchery. Instead of being operated as a commercial fish farm, the hatchery will now be operated with the purpose of educating the public about the river and its resources.

Most importantly, the Au Sable River is the big winner in this settlement, as the additional pollution has now ceased.

Going forward, the Grayling Hatchery, operated by the Grayling Hatchery, Inc., will be open to the public between Memorial and Labor Day. Brook, brown and rainbow trout will reside in the raceways helping to educate the public about the Au Sable River. It's hoped eventually that arctic grayling fish, for which the City of Grayling was named, will again swim in the raceways. A pond located on the hatchery property is a perfect venue to introduce the public, especially youth, to the sport of fly fishing. As such, the pond will be used for fly fishing lessons. Partnerships are being sought with various educational institutions to help fulfill the mission of the Grayling Hatchery, Inc. to educate the public about the Au Sable River.



Anglers of the Au Sable also has a goal in all of this. Ultimately, and hopefully not too long into the future, the East Branch above and below the Grayling Hatchery will be reconnected to allow free and unimpeded movement of trout.

The Anglers of the Au Sable, in sticking to its mission of preserving and protecting the Au Sable River, has helped start a new chapter in the life of our beloved Au Sable River.

Membership and Treasurer's Update Carol Vidrio, Treasurer

Our membership is growing! We now have over 260 members who are supporting our efforts toward preserving and protecting the Au Sable River. Thank you to all of you!

As you know, our fiscal year begins on August 1st of every year. If you have not yet renewed for the 2018/2019 fiscal year or would like to make an additional donation, please do so by visiting our website at www.arpoa-mi.org to pay with PayPal or send us a check via mail to PO Box 15, Grayling, Michigan 49738. Your dues and donations are tax deductible per IRS 501(C)3 regulations.

We are always open to any suggestions our members have as to how you would like us to utilize your donations. You may leave any questions or comments by e-mailing us at arpoa.mi@gmail.com or visit our website at www.arpoa-mi.org.

Thank you again for your support!

Opening Weekend Events

Old Au Sable Fly Shop's event is on Friday, April 26 with the food starting at 1pm until it's gone. The TU chapter will be selling tickets on their 60 year bamboo anniversary fly rod, reel, and case. The chapter will also be selling tickets for the custom made wooden drift boat which will be there on display.



Come join us in August for a Purple Loosestrife Removal Party!

We are tentatively scheduling our Purple Loosestrife Removing events on Wednesday, August 7, and Saturday, August 10, 2019. We are making great strides in reducing the population of this invasive species. Last year, we worked hard and were rewarded with delicious food and beverages. Please mark your calendars and stay tuned for further information.

Lovells Township Historical Society Trout Opener and Leaky Waders 1K is on Saturday, April 27. Registration is at 9:30 am. The race starts at 11 am at the Lovells Hall. \$20 fee covers the race, lunch, and souvenir. Lunch will be available for non racers at noon. Nicole Watson will be making a presentation on the reintroduction of the Grayling back into the Au Sable River. This year's topic at the museum will be "Trout of the Au Sable River." 2019 will see the opening of the permanent Art Neumann display in the new wing of the Trout Fishing museum, and an exhibit on trout is on the main floor.

Controversial Ban on Alcohol Now on Hold

A controversial ban on alcohol use on three Michigan rivers has now been put on hold until at least 2020. The new policy would affect the National Wild and Scenic River sections of the Au Sable, Manistee, and Pine rivers. The closure order was intended "to address persistent public safety issues and protect natural resources on rivers of outstanding recreational value," said Huron-Manistee National Forests Supervisor Leslie Auriemma. "Our goal is to create a safer, more sustainable, and more enjoyable experience for the thousands of visitors who recreate on our National Wild and Scenic Rivers each year." Specifically, it would apply on and within 200 feet of the:

- Au Sable River between Mio Dam Pond and 4001 Canoe Landing
- Manistee River between Tippy Dam and the Huron-Manistee National Forests' administrative boundary
- Pine River between Elm Flats and Low Bridge.

Private lands, developed campgrounds and designated campsites within those river corridors would not be affected. Violation of the order would be punishable by a maximum fine of \$5,000 and imprisonment for up to five years.

Though some people welcomed the ban, some business owners and community leaders said they were caught off guard and worried about the impact of the policy on tourism. Officials are convening a group of business owners, government leaders and residents to come up with a plan that addresses the the public safety and environmental issues associated with alcohol use on the waterways.

