



# THE RIVER GUARDIAN

## FALL 2021

**ARPOA BOARD:** David Smith, President; Micki Levin, Vice President; Margot Surrige, Treasurer; David Long, Secretary; Julie Gibbs, Web Director; Howard Johnson, Cedars for the Au Sable; Steve Poulos, River Guardians; Boyd Dillon, John Blakemore, Adolph "Dolph" Greenberg.

### From the President

**David Smith**

The days are getting shorter, the ferns are turning brown, and the nights are cooling off, heralding the arrival of Fall. As the leaves lose the green that's been hiding brilliant colors, the river is quieting down with less commercial canoe traffic and the smell of wood smoke is in the air. Summer is over but, rest assured, there will be another one soon enough. In the meantime, the beauty of the river with its vibrant Fall color and its hush of winter snow is ahead of us.

We had a wonderfully attended Annual Wine & Cheese Meet & Greet at Gates Lodge this July, seeing old friends and meeting new ones. The meeting is truly a high point of the summer.

We had two very successful Purple Loosestrife Volunteer Events and treated the river from town to McMasters Bridge. This was the first event since 2018 and, while there was plenty of the invasive plant to collect, there wasn't nearly as much as there could have been after missing a couple of



years. This is surely a testament to the ten years of Association efforts. The days were beautiful, the lunches provided were delicious, and the volunteers were enthusiastic.

Two ARPOA members were recognized for their extraordinary contributions to the Au Sable River. Bob Andrus received the Anglers of the Au Sable's River Keeper Award at the River Cleanup for his dedicated care of the river since the 1970's when he came to Grayling to teach. Karen Harrison was honored with the Michigan Environmental Council's Petoskey Prize. Over the last 15 years, she has served on the board of the Anglers, the Au Sable River Watershed Committee, and the Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited of which she is currently president. She has helped raise over a million dollars for river improvement and led MGFTU to earning Chapter of the Year from Michigan TU three times. Karen is the latest of three Au Sable people to win this prize since 2009 (Rusty Gates, 2009 and Bob Andrus, 2013). The Association is proud to have these river heroes as members and the River is better for their efforts.

See you on the river!

David

## Purple Loosestrife Removal - Is It Working?

ARPOA has been working on treating Purple Loosestrife in the river corridor since 2009 when the Board of Directors committed to a five-year project to inventory and remove the invasive plant. Twelve years later, it seems appropriate to address the success of the project.

In 2009, the feeling was that all we had to do was find out where the plants were growing (inventory), send a few groups of volunteers out to remove the plants (treatment), repeat for a few years, and declare the project completed. Today, we know better. It's very likely the river will never be truly free of Purple Loosestrife and our goal has shifted instead to controlling it.

### But are our efforts making a difference?

#### The following two stories suggest it is.

In 2010, Marie and I decided to spend a Saturday afternoon canoeing from the Rayburn bridge to Burton's Landing, stopping along the way to dig up any Loosestrife we saw. There were a few plants flowering just upstream of the bridge, so we started there. Soon it became apparent that for every flowering plant there were (quite?) a few more without flowers. Also, there were a lot more plants away from the river in the wetlands that were not visible from the bridge. Long story short, we spent about three hours digging, filled our canoe dangerously full, and never got past the bridge. The next year, volunteers went from town to Burton's and found eight plants near the Rayburn bridge and never more than a couple (and sometimes none) every year since.



That same year, a group of five volunteers started in town with three canoes and planned to go to Burton's removing plants along the way. By the time they got to the 175 bridges, barely out of town, the canoes were full of Purple Loosestrife. The following year, a Huron Pines AmeriCorps Swat Team and ARPOA volunteers spent a week, working six hours a day, going from town to Wakeley Landing collecting invasives along the way. At the end of each day, two canoes were full for a total of ten canoes worth of Loosestrife plants for the week. In 2013, the Association hosted a Huron Pines AmeriCorps Purple

Loosestrife event with eight volunteers in four canoes going from town to Stephans Landing. At the end of the day, a lot of plants were removed but none of the canoes were very full.

This August (2021), 22 volunteers, over three days, treated the river from Grayling to McMaster's Bridge. The canoeing was perfect each day with only a few interruptions to cut and collect Purple Loosestrife plants. Quite a difference between the early years (2009-2011) and today, 2021. The takeaway seems to be we are making a difference. Purple Loosestrife may not disappear from the Au Sable, but we may well be able to keep it under control!

## Be a River Guardian!

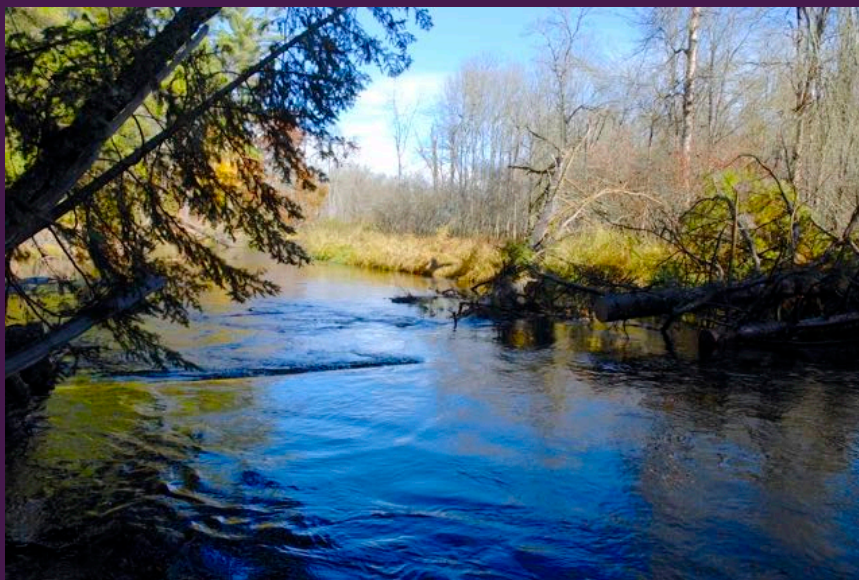
Fall is here and most of the summer activity on the river has abated. This is a great time to get out on your home water or favorite stretch to check out the status of the river, especially after all the activity over the past few months. If you see something that needs investigating, please let us know. Some issues may include invasives, obstructions to navigation, erosion, unpermitted structures in or out of the stream, etc. This information is shared with the appropriate agency for further investigation.

ARPOA initiated the River Guardians project several years ago to monitor the health and status of the river. The Mainstream and South Branch were divided into reaches and volunteers recruited to float their section at least twice a year and report to the project leader.

The reaches are listed below. If you are interested in participating as a River Guardian, please let me know and I will assign you to your preferred reach. Those who have volunteered last year, thanks. You alerted us to downed trees hampering navigation and some unauthorized structures. All issues were addressed and resolved. If you are participating again this year, please let me know ([poulios@msu.edu](mailto:poulios@msu.edu)) and I will keep you on the roster.

### MAINSTREAM

Frederic to Pollack Bridge  
Pollack Bridge to Grayling (park  
in town)  
Grayling to Burton's Landing  
Burton's Landing to Wakeley  
Bridge  
Wakeley Bridge to McMaster's  
Mc Masters to Parmalee  
Parmalee to Camp 10  
Camp 10 to Mio Dam



### SOUTH BRANCH

Roscommon to Chase Bridge  
Chase Bridge to Smith Bridge  
Smith Bridge to the Mainstream

If you have any questions, feel free to contact Steve Poulios ([poulios@msu.edu](mailto:poulios@msu.edu)) or any ARPOA board member. Thank you!



## Treasurer's Report

Margot Surridge

Membership Contributions are now due!

If you haven't submitted your annual contribution to ARPOA, please do so soon. Your continued support helps us care for the river by funding programs like our Invasives Removal events for Purple Loosestrife and River Guardians. In addition, this past year we assisted several non-profit organizations whose missions focus on protecting the Au Sable River. Your contributions go a long way in providing a healthy Au Sable River.

**Annual Contributions are:**

Individual/Family \$35.00

Sustaining \$100.00

Club/Corporate \$75.00

**You can submit your payment to:**

ARPOA

P.O. Box 15

Grayling, MI. 49738

Or pay via PayPal to [ARPOA.mi@gmail.com](mailto:ARPOA.mi@gmail.com). Our sincere thanks to those who have already submitted their contributions, and to everyone for continuing to support the Au Sable River!



*Wishing you a kind and peaceful  
holiday season!*