

BOARDMAN-OTTAWAY RIVER NETWORK

November 5, 2024 | 10:30am-12pm

Grand Traverse Conservation District

MEETING NOTES

I. Welcome and Introductions

See participant list below.

II. Recreation Plan Action Team Updates

- a. Legal framework for the river
 - i. There isn't a current pathway to pursue for the river to have its own rights due to issues related to standing.
 - ii. Next steps focus on assessing and enhancing the current regulatory environment inside the watershed and assessing policies and implementation environment outside the watershed.
 - iii. GTB Rights of Nature resolution sent to tribal council with a comment period. Questions from membership included what it means, if it limits tribal members, how it would stand up in a court of law.
- b. Healthy thriving river
 - i. Looked at data that is currently being measured or can be collected/analyzed using existing information, as well as what that data tells us – is it a metric with standards (ex: phosphorus), an indicator of something else (ex: macroinvertebrate diversity & abundance), or a trend (ex: tree canopy change over time).
 - ii. Identified 20 measurements that will help us determine the ecological health of the river. Next steps are to define the importance/relevance of each measurement, determine standards for each measurement and how these standards translate into “grades,” and collect the most recent data to determine if those standards are being met.
 - iii. As the ecological aspect of defining a healthy river takes shape, we need to consider how to replicate this for cultural, economic, and social health.
- c. Robust and comprehensive education program
 - i. Assessed current educational programs, identifying what education programs are currently in place.
 - ii. Began creating educational templates that include key messages about prioritizing the health of the river as it relates to the indicators/metrics identified by the healthy river action team.
 - iii. Next steps are focused on compiling a document that describes each type of river ecosystem from headwater wetlands all the way to the bay, offering in-person educational events on the river, and creating a river “academy” core curriculum about the river.

III. Topic of Interest

- a. FishPass update

IV. Open Forum/Announcements

- a. East Bay Township
 - i. Looking to adopt their new Zoning Ordinance on Nov. 12th; it will add a 25-foot setback for all regulated wetlands, floodplain building regulations, regulations on building on steep slopes (over 15%), prohibition on retaining walls in sensitive areas, a consistent 50-foot building/structure setback from all water bodies, enhanced vegetative buffer requirements, and an increased setback from Grand Traverse Bay from 45 to 50 feet.
- b. Green ER
 - i. Hosting a showing of The Fish Thief on January 15th at 6pm at the Elk Rapids Cinema. There is no charge (donations accepted) and a discussion will follow the movie.
- c. Grand Traverse County Road Commission
 - i. Early stages of design to replace Beitner Road culverts over the river. GTCRC is evaluating pedestrian crossing under the bridge and access management around trailheads.
 - ii. Intend to address the crossing at S. Airport Road at the end of 2026.
- d. Conservation Resource Alliance
 - i. Continuing dam removals near Chums Corner on an unnamed tributary to the Boardman-Ottaway River (locally known as Apple Creek). Dam failure in 2022 led to discussion with private property owners (individual and condo association). Currently at 60% design for removal.
- e. Grand Traverse Conservation District
 - i. Welcomed Sara Vaughen to their team.
- f. Grand Traverse Band
 - i. Engaged in Black River dams (Cheboygan County), 2 aging dams up for relicensing. GTB would like to see them removed or at least find a solution to allow sturgeon upstream.
 1. Largest population of lake sturgeon with a harvest (6 fish) along with a streamside rearing facility.
 2. 2 waterfalls, 1 is the largest in the lower peninsula.
 3. Potential to fundraise, purchase, decommission dams.
- g. Arctic grayling initiative meeting last May announced that the decision on where grayling would be introduced would be announced this fall.
- h. Traverse City Downtown Development Authority
 - i. Lower Boardman-Ottaway River walkway will be funded even without a TIF extension.
- i. The Watershed Center
 - i. Recently received an EGLE grant to replace the culvert at 11th street where it crosses Kids Creek.

V. Adjourn

PARTICIPANTS

AuSable Institute (AI)	Heath Garris
Brook Trout Coalition (BTC)	Tom White
Community members	Steve Largent, Jeanie Williams
Conservation Resource Alliance (CRA)	Suzie Knoll, Nate Winkler
For Love of Water (FLOW)	Mike Vickery
GT Band Ottawa & Chippewa Indians (GTB)	Brett Fessell, Naomi Louchouran
Grand Traverse Conservation District (GTCD)	Rachael Straughen, Sara Vaughen, Tom Wertz
Grand Traverse County (GTC)	Chris Forsyth, Derek Weichlein (RC)
GT Regional Community Foundation (GTRCF)	Dave Mengebier
Great Lakes Environmental Center (GLEC)	Maggie Petersen
Great Lakes Fishery Commission (GLFC)	Dan Zielinski
Green Elk Rapids (GER)	Royce Ragland
Inland Seas Education Association (ISEA)	Juliana Lisuk
Michigan Trout Unlimited (MTU)	Liz Petrella
Northern MI Env'tl Action Council (NMEAC)	Mike Foley, Barb Stamaris
OHM Advisors (OHM)	Alisha Busutil
The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay (TWC)	Christine Crissman
Traverse Area Recreation & Transportation (TART)	Chris Kushman