

Spring 2007

The Terrapene

Terrapene: Any one of numerous species of tortoises living in fresh water and brackish waters.

*A publication of the White River Watershed Partnership
Made possible with the generous support of the Fremont Area Community Foundation*



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From the Headwaters

by Tom Thompson, Chairman of the Board

Welcome to springtime and warmer days!

Last year, a questionnaire was sent to all 371 river front property owners in Newaygo County. Several of the 127 returns mentioned that all property owners need more information on the Natural River standards for the White River. We have included with this newsletter a flyer on the basic rules and information on the Natural River Designation for the White River. For more information, contact us or the government units as indicated in the flyer.

Since we became aware of Nestlé's (Ice Mountain) consideration to withdraw water in Monroe Township at the headwaters area of the main branch of the White River last fall, the Board has spent considerable time on this issue. The Board has voted to oppose their proposal. A complete copy of our position – resolution statement is included in this newsletter. We have heard of four townships that are considering zoning ordinance language that they hope will give them some control or say-so in any proposed water exporting from their township. This is a huge issue that I urge all concerned citizens to keep aware of and involved.

Our Annual Meeting will be on Saturday, May 12, 2007 at the Hesperia Library at 9:30 a.m. We will send out agenda information as we get closer to that date.

Grant Received for Planning & Education in White Cloud Area

Last fall a grant request was made to the Fremont Area Community Foundation for survey and planning on the White River from the White Cloud Dam downstream to Wishing Well Park. The grant request came as a result of meetings last summer between the City of White Cloud, Timberland RC&D, The U.S. Forest Service, GVSU, VP Connections – Phil Dakin, and the White River Watershed Partnership (WRWP).

The Fremont Foundation has agreed to an \$8,400 grant to do survey and planning for river frontage on public properties on this stretch of the river. There is interest in improved stream bank access at a couple of these sites, erosion control at a storm drain, and other habitat improvements.

It was also realized that the White Cloud Schools complex was within easy walking distance of the river via the Campground Park. There was interest by their science teachers in involving water monitoring by students as part of their science curriculum. Therefore, part of the grant will be for teacher training and equipment. Therefore, part of the grant will be for teacher training and equipment.

Late Breaking News!

As we were ready to send this newsletter to the printer, Nestle (Ice Mountain) announced they were abandoning their controversial plan to pump water from the White River headwaters in Monroe Township. They have been looking at the site for three years and installed test wells in early January.

Watershed Wide Attention

by Nichol De Mol, Annis Water Resources Institute

Many people are familiar with the story of White Lake. In 1985, White Lake was listed as an Area of Concern for the Great Lakes. A plan has been developed to restore and protect this important resource from years of industrial pollution and current development. But White Lake is at the mouth of a 344,166 acre watershed that spans across three counties: Muskegon, Newaygo, and Oceana. The health of White Lake is tied directly to the watershed that feeds it.

To fully understand this system, the Annis Water Resources Institute of Grand Valley State University received funds from MDEQ for a two-year project to reduce the negative impact that pollutants are having on the watershed through the development and initial implementation of a stakeholder-driven watershed management plan. The plan will identify nonpoint source pollutants (pollution caused when rain, snowmelt, or wind carry pollutants off the land into the waterbodies), their existing potential sources, and the cause for the pollution. Within the plan there will be recommendations on controlling the pollutants identified. These recommendations will include both physical improvements (i.e. possibly planting of vegetation along the river bank, fencing around streams to keep cattle out, etc.) in the watershed and non-physical improvements (i.e. possibly looking at improving existing master plans/ordinances to include natural resource protection, educational materials for riparian owners on the Natural Rivers Act, etc.). Development of a plan also involves the creation of an education strategy to inform stakeholders of nonpoint source pollution concerns and steps that can be taken to control these pollution sources.

To develop an effective plan for the watershed there needs to be stakeholder involvement. The White Lake Association, the Muskegon Conservation District, the White Lake Public Advisory Council, the MDEQ, the MDNR, and the US Forest Service are playing a role in the development of the plan. The WRWP is acting as the advisory group to the project. If you would like to be involved in this project please contact me by email demoln@gvsu.edu or phone 616-331-3092. We would appreciate any input that you as a White River Watershed stakeholder can provide.

Adopt-A-River-Section

by Ray Schinler, WRWP Board

The Board of the White River Watershed Partnership would like to coordinate annual clean-up efforts of the river and streams in the watershed.

If your group, club, or family would like to “adopt” a stretch of stream we will keep a record of who has adopted what areas to avoid duplication. We will post the information on our web page and periodically in our newsletter. An adopted area could also be a public park on the river or road end.

If you do adopt an area for stream and bank cleanup, we recommend doing it in the late spring or early summer. We ask that groups adopting a section do the following:

- * Keep safety in mind whether on foot or water craft
- * Youth groups have proper adult supervision
- * Respect private property owners
- * Communicate with public park owners, etc.
- * Keep us posted after your cleanup and items found (2 bags general trash & removed one tire, etc.).
- * Notify us if dropping out of the program
- * Don't take on more than you can conveniently handle (one mile, etc.). Be familiar with your area.

For more information contact us on our website – www.wrwp.org or call Ray Schinler at 231.861.4624.

Grant Received for Downstream Work

A grant has been received from the Great Lakes Commission for stream bank erosion control and habitat restoration work in Blue Lake Township in the area of the White River Campground and in the Weesies Road end area. The \$64,000 grant is part of the Great Basin Program for Soil Erosion, and Sedimentation Control will also provide for similar work at the Old Mill Campground in Oceana County.

The Grant will be administered by the Oceana County Conservation District with support from the Muskegon County Conservation District, Timberland RC&D, and the WRWP. The Grant requires a 25% contribution from the riparian property owner where work is taking place.

Ice Mountain—Nestle Water Withdrawal Proposal on Headwaters of the White River Position—Resolution Statement White River Watershed Partnership (WRWP)

Introduction

The WRWP Board of Directors offers the following position statement after these activities:

- * Attending public meetings on the proposal and hearing from public citizens and riparian property owners.
- * Studying details of the proposed water withdrawal project.
- * Meetings with company (Nestle) officials on their proposal.
- * Examining our Mission and Purpose Statement.
- * Lengthy discussion among ourselves.

Background position statement

- * Whereas the White River is the most southern major cold water stream in Michigan.
- * Whereas the White River supports a population of brown trout and native brook trout, our state fish.
- * Whereas the White River supports natural reproduction anadromous runs of salmon and steelhead.
- * Whereas the White River is habitat for walleye, suckers and other native fishes.
- * Whereas the White River system provides habitat for diverse wildlife species.
- * Whereas Nestle has stated that their proposed water withdrawal will reduce stream flow and water volume.
- * Whereas this proposed water withdrawal is at the headwaters of the White, stream flow will be reduced to the mouth of the river and reduce turnover time of the waters of White Lake into Lake Michigan.
- * Whereas the proposed water withdrawal could have an adverse impact upon the riparian property owners on the river and White Lake.
- * Whereas the proposed water withdrawal could have a negative impact on recreational uses of the river system and White Lake.
- * Whereas the water withdrawn can be removed from the White River watershed and also the Great Lakes basin.
- * Whereas we see no difference in not allowing a pipeline water withdrawal from the Great Lakes Basin as opposed to permitting removal of water in an unlimited number of containers as long as the containers are of 5.7 gallons or less.
- * Whereas the White River flows into Lake Michigan and last fall, Lake Michigan was six inches from its all time recorded low – approximately four feet from its all time recorded high.
- * Whereas these waters could be removed from the Great Lakes basin at a time of below average water levels and precipitation.
- * Whereas this proposed water withdrawal could also negatively impact the ecosystem in other unforeseen ways.
- * Whereas this unique head water area in southern Monroe Township contains the Oxford Swamp and springs that start the main branch of the White River is currently lightly impacted by human development.
- * Whereas the natural water resource is being taken from the public and sold for private profit with no recourse to the public for damage to the resource.
- * Whereas the White River has been designated a Natural River (Country – Scenic River) by the State of Michigan under the Natural Rivers Act to protect it and provides a plan so as “to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural qualities of the river area.”
- * Whereas section 324.30502 of the Natural River Act titled: Natural river; designation; purpose; long-range plans; publicity; cooperation states, “The department, (state DNR) in the interest of the people of the state and future generations, may designate a river or portion of a river as a natural river area for the purpose of preserving and enhancing its values for water conservation, its free flowing condition, and its fish, wildlife, boating, scenic, aesthetic, floodplain, ecologic, historic and recreational values and uses.”

(continued on next page)

Ice Mountain—Nestle Withdrawal Proposal on Headwaters of the White River (cont.)

Be it Resolved and Known that based on what we know at this time, the Board of Directors of the White River Watershed Partnership is ***OPPOSED*** to the proposed Nestle water withdrawal in Monroe Township or any other large water withdrawal or water mining from the White River Watershed.

Be it further resolved that we ask the state to do the same and support the intent of the Natural River Act Plan for the White River and,

Be it further resolved that we ask the Michigan Legislative and Governor to revisit the large scale water withdrawal law passed in 2006 as the criteria for determining an adverse impact on the resource is too limited in scope and not well defined.

By vote of the Board of Directors, March 15, 2007

Tom Thompson, Chairman

A Monroe Township Resident Speaks Out

by Samantha Jackson, resident

Hello, my name is Samantha Jackson. I am a Monroe Township Resident, my family has lived in Northeast Newaygo County since the 1830's and 40's. I, as do the majority of Monroe Township residents, oppose Ice Mountains plan to drill and bottle water from our residentially zoned, rural township, and the headwaters of the White River. It will compromise, our beloved trout stream and a major source of tourist based revenue to Newaygo County. I feel this is also a violation of the Monroe Township property owners and resident's civil and God-Given rights! We North Michiganders, as you know, are farmers, hunters, fishermen, outdoorsmen and true stewards of the land. We choose to live in our rural communities, rather than to relocate for economic benefit, because we are true stewards of the land. If you come to North Michigan's Rural Townships, and ask the people here what is most important to us, you won't hear a word about money, economy or materialism! We'll tell you, "my kids, my family, the people we love and that we want them to be healthy and happy." If tomorrow a natural disaster hit, and all of the material things we possessed were to be washed away, the things that were truly important to you (family, children, love) would take precedence over all material things. The fact of the matter is, all life, our children, our families, our animals (domestic and wild), all plants, all trees, all LIFE needs water to survive. There are some things that you don't put a price tag on. Life is one of those things, and a natural resource that is vital to sustain all life is also one of those things. This is not oil, a natural resource that produces energy. Please stop water privatization! This is not a solution to Michigan's economical problems anyway. It is only 250 jobs! Switzerland's Ice Mountain is reaping the benefit, not Michigan!

Editor's Note – Samantha Jackson of Monroe Township has been a vocal opponent of Nestle – Ice Mountain's Bottled Water withdrawal proposal at the headwaters of the White River in her township. The above is part of a letter she sent to State Representative Hansen printed with her permission.

Please complete this form and become a member.

I want to support the White River Watershed Partnership. Please accept my gift of \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

**White River Watershed
Partnership
Membership**

Endowment Fund Update and Thank You

by Tom Thompson, WRWP Board

History – Back in 2001 – 2002 when the WRWP was organized as a support group for the river and the watershed, Alcoa Foundation – Howmet Castings made a \$5,000 donation to start an endowment fund to support the WRWP at the Community Foundation for Muskegon County. Shortly after, the Fremont Community Foundation (FCF) announced a \$10,000 dollar for dollar matching grant to start an endowment fund for us at the FCF.

The Muskegon fund has grown to \$16,518 and the Fremont fund to \$25,825 putting our total endowment at \$42,343 at this printing. The \$10,000 matching grant at Fremont has been totally used. Remember, only earnings on the principal can be used by us. To date, we have taken one thousand from the Muskegon fund.

We are very appreciative of the support of many individuals and groups toward these funds. As the endowment grows, it will provide us with much needed money for operations and projects. Our next goal is to grow the endowment to \$45,000.

This past fall, Alcoa Foundation – Howmet Castings made another \$5,000 donation, which became \$10,000 with a dollar for dollar match from the FCF. We are very appreciative of the following organizations and individuals for giving to our endowment: (Fund beginning to January 1, 2007)

Mr. & Mrs. Jeff Auch
 Mr. Marvin Boerma
 Mr. & Mrs. William A. Bowen
 Mr. & Mrs. James R. Bos
 Ms. D. Jayne Biggart
 Mr. & Mrs. Steven D. Burt
 Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Caliguri
 Mr. & Mrs. A. Newton Dilley
 Ms. Sharon Daly
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 Mr. & Mrs. Norman Ullman
 Kenneth D. Williamson
 Michelle O. Wheeler
 Mr. & Mrs. William Wise

Alcoa Foundation – Howment Castings
 Fremont Area Community Foundation
 White Lake Area Sportsfishing Association

White Lake Association
 White River Watershed Partnership

Thanks again for your support!

If you would like more information about the White River Watershed Partnership or would like to become a member* please contact any board member or write us at:

WRWP

**P.O. Box 416
 HESPERIA, MI
 49421**

*** Annual Dues are:**

Counties	\$100
Community Based Organizations	\$100
Corporate or Commercial	\$100
Local Municipalities	\$50
Households	\$25
Native American Tribal Govts	\$25
Non-profit Orgs.	\$25

White River Watershed Day
 Saturday after first full week in May

Monthly Board Meetings
(open to the public)
 Second Thursday of the month at 5:30 p.m. at the Fremont NRCS Building.



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WHITE RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP
P.O. BOX 416
HESPERIA, MI 49421

The White River Watershed Partnership's mission is to protect the unique characteristics and the natural resources of the White River Watershed by promoting education, conservation, restoration, and preservation activities.

Quick Facts—White River

- * Mainstream Length – 70 miles
- * 2 dams on the mainstream
- * 20 small lakes drain into the River
- * Is a state designated “Natural River”
- * Has 24 named creeks (tributaries), with a total length of 108 miles
- * Starts at an elevation of 980 feet above sea level and drops 400 feet to an elevation of 580 feet at White Lake and Lake Michigan
- * Drains a surface area of approximately 344,000 acres
- * North Branch Length – 20 miles
- * 5 dams on tributary streams
- * White Lake is the drowned river mouth

The White River Watershed Partnership THANKS the Fremont Area Community Foundation for its continued support.
