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Summary Overview

This report was commissioned to summarize the history and positive economic impact of plans to provide shallow-draft navigation for safe recreational boating on a 22.5 mile stretch of the Grand River, hereafter named the Grand River Waterway Project (GRWP). This summary provides a review of anticipated challenges, identifies some of the costs involved, provides suggestions for strategic planning and presents the basis for a positive economic impact. The report recognizes some limitations in anticipating the full scope of remediation of this course of the Grand River. The extent and successful completion of the project and its true cost depend on a number of factors yet to be determined, not the least of which is water quality, the amount of dredging and disposal required, and any environmental hurdles that may be imposed by state regulatory agencies.

Introduction

There is a historic resilience to the Grand River.

Michigan's motto includes these words: “If you seek ... look around you.” According to Jim Clifton, Chairman of Gallup, “Everything is local is truer regarding job creation than anything else.” His point reinforces our state motto. The resources to improve our economy are within our reach. They are all around us. The Gallup CEO puts the truth of job growth in perspective when he writes: “the core energy of entrepreneurship and innovation, the fuel for GDP... predicts the conditions that occur before free enterprise creates growth and jobs. Simple states of mind like, confidence, optimism, determination, creativity, hope, and drive.” These positive attributes have characterized the people who have populated Michigan’s Grand River basin since the beginning of time—resourceful Native Americans, early European explorers, pioneers, settlers and modern-day industrialists. There is a historic resilience to the Grand River, and there is a resilient spirit in those who have shared a common geography with Michigan’s longest river. Industries closely associated with Grand River commerce have come and gone, but the West Michigan ethic of hard work and determination continue to transform Michigan’s changing economy. The beauty and allure of the Grand River’s idyllic setting and its draw as a 21st-century recreational destination point is the subject of this Grand River Waterway Project Executive Summary.

The Problem and Opportunity

“Currently, boating is made dangerous by numerous obstructions hazards in the [Grand] river, including pilings, wing walls and extensive shoaling of the river.”

“There are no aids to navigation and the numerous bars, snags and other hazards to navigation make the river dangerous to even local boaters familiar with local river conditions.”

These statements of finding from a forty-year-old study remain a valid assessment of a 22.5 mile stretch of the Grand River today. The opportunity to improve public access of the river for recreational

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2 Clifton, 54.
4 PFRSDN, 26.
use has gone begging for four decades and an opportunity to improve the quality of life for area residents and positively impact the economy of West Michigan has been sorely neglected. Navigational improvement on this stretch of the river would more effectively link the river corridor from downtown Grand Rapids all the way to Lake Michigan.

The Goal

- Restore the integrity of a 22.5 mile stretch of the Grand River to allow shallow-draft navigation for safe recreational boating in Kent and Ottawa Counties (optimal draft of five feet);
- Expand the local economy through enhanced tourism, new business ventures and job creation;
- Protect and improve water quality and wildlife habitat (see A Strategic Plan of Action);
- Facilitate the development of a comprehensive Grand River Waterway Corridor Plan as a stewardship legacy.

Positive Economic Impact

\[ \text{"$4.2M and 61 New Jobs"} \]

In the four-county target market of Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties, the number of registered power boats 40 feet or less is 71,638. The number of pontoons total 9,241, and powered watercraft, 13,936 (see Appendix A, Table 2). In spite of their numbers, however, these watercraft are more conspicuous by their absence than present on the 22.5 miles of the Grand River flowing west from Grand Rapids. And that in short makes the case for improved shallow-draft navigation along this course of Michigan’s grandest river.\(^5\)

Based on the MSU On-line Boating Economic Impact Model, a fully built-out marina development in the GRWP corridor totaling 500 slips would add $1.8 million in labor income and $2.9 million in value-added income to the local economy for an annual impact of $4.2M and 61 additional new jobs.\(^6\) This is calculated using the four-county target-market, 40 foot maximum boat size and annual per-boat spending of $1,500. It also includes 4,200 nights of transient rentals. Dollars generated by construction costs and property taxes are not included in this matrix and would be an additional boon to the local economy.

Additional Economic Findings

This lower stretch of the Grand River supports a diverse fish population and a significant recreational fishery, most notably steelhead, sturgeon, and salmon. A two-year angler study of metro Grand Rapids shows a combined total of 46,164 angler trips that equate to an economic value to the community of nearly $1.1M. This federal study was based on

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\(^5\) For the economic relevance of boating-related businesses and associated sales in the area, see Appendix A, Table 1.

\(^6\) Labor Income includes wages and salaries, payroll benefits and incomes of sole proprietors. Value Added is income accruing to households in the region plus rents and profits of businesses and indirect business taxes. As the name implies, it is the net value added to the region’s economy. For example, the value added by a marina includes wages and salaries paid to employees, their payroll benefits, profits of the marina, and sales and other indirect business taxes. The marina’s non-labor operating costs such as purchases of supplies and services from other firms are not included as value added by the marina. (Source: Economic Impact Analysis, Recreation Marine Research Center, MSU.)
a value of $24 per angler trip. According to state fisheries experts, however, this economic impact is underestimated since the study was based on spring and fall seasons only. Additionally, they contend the value would be appreciably higher if the angler survey had included other “main-stem fishing sites” not the least of which can be found along the river stretch flowing west from Grand Rapids through Ottawa County.⁷

According to the Michigan Economic Development Authority, 27% of the travel-related activities of all outside visitors to Allegan, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties are related to “Beach and Waterfront” activities. Additionally, spending for leisure activities from outside visitors to the four-county area including Kent County amounts to $1.3B annually. Clearly, tourism is an economic windfall for West Michigan.⁸

Background

Arguably, the Grand River is the most underutilized recreational asset in West Michigan.⁹

It is no secret that tourism and outdoor recreation rival agriculture and manufacturing as Michigan’s leading industries. In assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these economic sectors, water resources remain key to sustaining the vitality of all three pillars of the peninsular state’s economy. If past is prolog, West Michigan’s unique water resource can play a renewed role in the state’s economic recovery. Little wonder the Grand Rapids Press spotlighted the Grand River in feature articles during the summer of 2010, launching a new focus on the real possibilities of the Grand River as a catalyst for economic renewal. Press editor Paul Keep affirmed that “Not taking the Grand River for granted will be an important theme.”¹⁰ And that theme has resonated throughout West Michigan. Arguably, the Grand River is the most underutilized recreational asset in West Michigan. From the time the Northwest Ordinance opened the Michigan territory for settlement two centuries ago until the mid-1900’s, the Grand River was a thoroughfare of commerce and a root source of economic growth. And the potential exists today for the river to be the source of a new economic stimulus harnessed once again from the intrinsic value of the waterway itself. We see this happening in plans underway to restore the rapids of the Grand River as it courses through West Michigan’s flagship city—projected to add an estimated $5M annually to the local economy from whitewater kayaking, improved fisheries and enhanced aesthetic appeal to name a few.¹¹ (The total Whitewater project cost is pegged at $27M.)¹²

Long neglected but not forgotten is a 22.5 mile course of the Grand River from the Fulton Street Bridge in Grand Rapids to the Bass River Tributary in Ottawa County that was the subject of an extensive study done nearly 40 years ago.¹³ The possibilities for further growth of West Michigan’s economy from recreational activities on this course of the river remain untapped.

History

To separate recreational use from commercial benefit is to deny the mathematics that drive Michigan’s economy.

The passage of time often favors the gainful advantage of perspective. But time and neglect can also obscure why some plans never advance beyond the study stage, and why the vitality and urgency of a community effort cease to sustain its once energetic momentum.

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⁸ David Morris, email to C. Brown, November 1, 2012 (Source: Corporate Research Unit of the Michigan Economic Development Corporation).
¹⁰ River Restoration, Grand Rapids Restoration, Opportunities and Constraints Executive Summary, (Glenwood Springs, CO, July 2012), ES-5.
¹² As a consequence of being de-authorized by the River and Harbor Act of 1930, the upstream 22.5 mile stretch of the Grand River was eliminated from the overall Grand River Project Area supported and maintained by the USACE. The downstream 17.5 mile river course from below the Bass River to the mouth of the Grand River was retained and remains within the USACE’s Project Area.
Such is the case of the 1978 Preliminary Feasibility Report on Shallow Draft Navigation on Michigan’s Grand River. This lengthy report produced by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) involved a significant degree of community participation with countless hours of public hearings, local input and citizen comments that culminated in the findings of the final report. Since its release in January of 1978, the report has languished in the planning archives of local governments, a vestige of a once highly-spirited community effort to tap the neglected resources of that once proud and vital lifeblood coursing through Kent and Ottawa Counties, the Grand River.

The intent of the ’78 report was to evaluate the shallow-draft navigational needs of the Grand River from the Fulton Street Bridge (River Mile 40.7) to the Bass River Tributary in Georgetown Township in Ottawa County. The findings of the report indentified several options for recreational use of the waterway each involving differing degrees of river cleanup. A new generation of river enthusiasts has come of age since the ’78 report was a high point of discussion for area planners. So much time has passed in fact that there remains little collective or institutional memory to explain why the report failed to advance beyond the study stage. According to Chief Terry Long of the USACE’s Detroit District office, the ’78 report was never “justified,” because its purpose was “recreational, not commercial,” and therefore it had a “low priority ranking.” The semantics of this reasoning would be sharply debated today. In Michigan, recreation and commerce are inextricably bound. To separate recreational use from commercial benefit is to deny the mathematics that drive Michigan’s economy. No less an authority than the USACE, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) recognizes the importance of recreation as a weighting factor: “For the waterways to best serve the public, recreational uses should be considered in the determination of navigability.”

A rising recreational tide lifts all boats of Michigan commerce! To revive the USACE’s role in studying this 20-plus mile river stretch, the Ottawa County Planning and Performance Improvement Department sent a formal request to the USACE in the fall of 2011 to conduct a Preliminary Appraisal “to determine if there is a ‘federal interest’ in creating a shallow draft channel for recreational navigation purposes.” In a written response, the USACE stated the project “has not received funding in the Fiscal Year 2013 budget because of ongoing funding limitations for new start projects.” In a phone conversation, Chief Long acknowledged that the determining factor in awarding a Preliminary Appraisal rests on the same merits that befell the ’78 study, i.e., commercial trumps recreational. When pressed regarding the influence that Michigan’s congressional delegation could have if they were on record in support of the USACE pursuing action, the response was that a study would no doubt be advanced should the delegation be successful in appropriating funds under the authority of the Water Resource and Development Act. In spite of this, however, Chief Long said the same ultimate fate of non-implementation would doom this study since its intended purpose would be recreational not commercial. In addition, an unspoken hurdle is the current congressional attitude toward earmarks, once a competitive measure of a legislator’s constituent service.

It is interesting to note that in 2011, the USACE’s Detroit District awarded dredging contracts for two western Michigan harbors—Muskegon and St. Joseph in the amounts of $396,000 and $445,000 respectively. In a

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13 Long, Terri. Telephone interview. 9 September 2012.
14 Hanshue, 49
15 Josh Spencer, Ottawa Co. Economic Dev. Coordinator, letter to Terry Long citing the authority of Section 107 of the River and Harbor Act of 1960, as amended, 26 September 2011.
16 Terry Long, email response to Josh Spencer, 14 February 2012.
news release announcing the awards, Army Corps district engineer Lt. Col. Michael Derosier said: “These are important projects for the local economies. Keeping federal navigation channels dredged to authorized depths means millions of dollars worth of commodities can be transported without interruption, keeping hundreds of people working.”

For advocates of the Grand River Waterway Project, “keeping hundreds of people working” is the operative phrase. And that happens whether the dollars are generated from the safe transport of goods or the safe passage of recreational boaters and tourists. Either way, Michigan’s economy is the beneficiary.

Costs

The real price of everything ... is the toil and trouble of acquiring it. —Adam Smith

Ultimately, the total costs borne by the proponents of the GRWP depend on which one of two courses of action is chosen (see below), and the extent of dredging and timber removal. According to the engineering firm of Soils and Structures, Inc., of Wyoming, Michigan, the anticipated volume of dredged material for the GRWP is in the range of 75,000 to 100,000 cubic yards.

They base this determination on a review of publicly available Grand River depth charts. For comparative purposes, the recent USACE dredging contract awards correlate to $396,000 for dredging 54,000 cubic yards of material and $445,000 for dredging 61,000 cubic yards. Although not all dredging projects are equal, these figures do provide a point of reference.

Additionally, the amount of sediment dredged from the river bed has an associated disposal cost. One possible solution to mitigate this expense lies in the close proximity of the abandoned Fenske Landfill, now owned by the State of Michigan. Located on the north side of the Grand River, the landfill lies proximate to the Ottawa/Kent County line. There remains on this site an unused cell that could be the receptacle for dredged material. Costs associated with site preparation and approval will need to be accessed.

While true costs for dredging are indeterminate at this time, there are some known related preliminary costs. Foremost is the requirement for sediment testing. Soils and Structures, Inc. quotes the cost of sampling and laboratory testing along 18 miles of the GRWP area at $6,200. To get a more accurate assessment of the volume of material to be dredged and the exact location along the river bed for excavation, Gourdie-Fraser of Traverse City estimates the cost for hydrographic surveying at $7,500 for a preliminary investigation or longitudinal sounding, and $25,000 to do a complete survey. The latter includes taking cross-section sounding lines of the main portion of the river at approximately 300 foot intervals (based on an optimal draft of five feet).

Local river sage

The one person who has the most hands-on experience in navigating the shoals and sandbars of the lower stretch of the Grand River is Bill Boynton, owner of the Grand Lady riverboat. From 19 years experience on the river, his anecdotal assessment of what is needed to improve shallow-draft navigability is worth noting. Like the river pilots that plied America’s inland waterways when steam-
boats ruled the rivers, Boynton’s knowledge of river hazards and his keen sense of observation has imbued him with the sagacity of a Captain Bixby of Mark Twain lore. “If you don’t have local knowledge of [the river], you’re in trouble. You have to navigate ever so carefully,” he says.21 “There are sandbars and obstructions, but it wouldn’t be an insurmountable cost.” 22 Boynton claims that if the river could be improved and marked (buoyed), it would be used far more than it is now. He hesitantly confesses that he currently has the river virtually to himself. He believes overall navigability is doable and can be achieved at a reasonable sum without a huge amount of outlay. As an aside, he speaks glowingly of how the river ecology has made a marked improvement. “Wildlife has come back and we can now see the bottom of the river,” he says.23 The Grand Lady has a draft of two feet.

Choice of Options

Secure congressional support (preferably the entire state’s congressional delegation) to request an authority (under the Water Resources Development Act) for the USACE to initiate a Reconnaissance Study. The Reconnaissance Study will determine if there is Federal interest in conducting a Feasibility Study. The Reconnaissance Study is typically funded through an Energy and Water Development Appropriations Bill in the amount of $100,000.

If the Reconnaissance Study determines there is Federal interest in conducting a Feasibility Study, it is cost shared 50% Federal /50% non-Federal. The non-Federal partner must be a governmental entity, i.e., a township, city, county or state government.24

There are several advantages to having the USACE undertake this project. First, the Army Corps has the resources to take on a project of this scope. Second, the Army Corps would then be authorized to maintain it. Third, the USACE is not subject to all the formal permitting requirements that local governments must.

The imperative need to jumpstart Michigan’s struggling economy places the merits of the Grand River Waterway Project squarely on the economic-development table for serious discussion. Wealth, after all, is created by investing in enterprising projects that grow dollars exponentially. The growth matrix outlined for this project can only be achieved if the river is navigable. How then to get from here to there? How to create a viable plan that achieves the Butterfly Effect of an improved Grand River waterway that allows for shallow draft navigation that in turn increases river access that fosters greater recreational boating to produce an ever-expanding economic benefit to West Michigan is no small challenge. But its real potential for helping grow Michigan’s economy is compelling.

two paths to choose from

There are two paths to choose from to advance this project: 1) The Congressional/USACE path, and 2) the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) permitting path. Path 1) involves the following process:
perform, and so comparatively speaking, this option would be a turn-key process for local or county government applicants.

But there are two major hurdles to overcome with this path. First, getting Congress to justify and approve this project against hundreds of others throughout the country competing for the same federal dollars. And second, overcoming the USACE’s simplistic, but entrenched view of what defines “commerce” and what drives Michigan’s economy.

Path 2) involves a formal DEQ permitting process with initial permitting fees totaling a little over $4,000. According to DNR Fisheries Management Specialist, Scott Hanshue, an applicant for a project of this type would be required to have a qualified resource professional conduct field surveys of the aquatic and terrestrial habitats to identify potential risks and impacts. He projects: “a full-scale environmental impact statement covering the total impacts to aquatic and terrestrial communities would be required. There would also be cultural surveys, sediment quality surveys, etc. I would not be surprised if the required surveys exceeded $500,000.00 plus dollars.”

In addition, permission would be needed for riparian-right access from multiple property owners along the river course before any dredging operation could begin. Obviously, to get uniform access along the length of the river, every land owner would have to grant permission for entrance onto his or her private land. Hiring the services of a real estate attorney would be advisable.

Pre-Application Assistance--
To get a handle on true costs, the Water Resources Division of the DEQ has established a pre-permit application project review option. This program is designed to help potential applicants better understand the permitting process and help minimize planning costs and delays before a project permit filing is formally submitted. A one-page on-line application form is available to apply for this in-office consultation. The fee is $150. According to the DEQ website, a written copy of the DEQ’s findings along with other written comments or suggestions are mailed out within days following the project review meeting. Recently, the Grand Rapids Whitewater group engaged the services of the DEQ in requesting a pre-permit application review. Such a review could also help identify positive water quality and improved fisheries outcomes that could give added strategic value to the project.

Obstacles

“...wing dams and retaining walls served their purpose in their day. Today ... they prove only detrimental to the unwary pleasure boater who is unfamiliar with the old river channel.”

Once part of a river management plan to control the river’s current and keep the channel clean, these pilings are now their own navigational hazard. Don Chrysler’s bicentennial history of the Grand River gives a rare glimpse into the river’s past—“At the turn of the [last] century, ... wing walls were built with a single line of 12-inch posts, eight to 10 feet apart that were jetted into the bottom of the river.” Retaining walls to keep dredged sand from sliding back into the channels were built by “jetting in a double row of six to eight inch oak or maple posts.” Although there is no exact count of the number of wood pilings placed in the river bed a century ago, the ‘78 Army Corps study suggests there is a total of some 50,000 linear feet of pilings and wing walls.

Assuming that many of these submerged timbers have market value, there is unfortunately no provision in current state law for removal of submerged timber for harvesting purposes as allowed in other states. A new Michigan law passed in late 2011 expanded existing law allowing harvesting of submerged timber in Michigan’s...

25 Scott Hanshue, email to C. Brown, December 6, 2012.
27 Chrysler, 48.
28 Chrysler, 48.
29 PFRSDN, 36 (20,000 linear feet of pilings are referenced on page 37 for removal under the limited dredge plan).
Great Lakes to include inland lakes. Not surprisingly, however, the revised statute does not include rivers and streams. While permits can be issued under a separate statute for the removal of timber in Michigan rivers for purposes of navigation, there is no provision that this can be done to harvest the timber as a resource. The question begs itself—what to do with this asset?

The apparent underlying intent of this harvesting restriction is to control timber removal in rivers to protect fish habitat. To help mitigate habitat disruption, a select process for piling removal could be coordinated with the advice and consent of both state regulatory agencies—the DNR and DEQ. An amendment to the 2011 legislation could be introduced to allow harvesting on a limited scale or on a trial basis.

All in all, this entire project could be advanced in stages with a smaller segment of the 22.5 course remediated first for enhanced navigability. Where habitat issues are of concern, the area chosen could be that portion that would be the least impactful. Such a process could serve as a demonstration of the true potential for the complete 22.5 mile stretch.

### Developing Alliances and Organizing Support

Any task worth accomplishing begins with a spark of interest that can expand into a growing network of support and alliances.

The whitewater project, for example, began with just two individuals who enjoy kayaking. Their passion turned to a vision that captured the imagination of others and Grand Rapids city officials joined ranks. Although it too faces many hurdles before it can be called a fait accompli, the whitewater project appears to be on an upward trajectory. And it all began with small beginnings.

#### A strategic plan of action should include the following steps:

1) **Decide which path to pursue.**

2) **Organize an advisory group.** Some suggested names include: The Grand River Waterway Project Alliance (GRWPA), Grand River Corridor Alliance (GRCA), or Grand River Recreational Corridor Alliance (GRRCA), and consider establishing it as a 501(c)(3). Assign as a task of this group the responsibility to explore and recommend a specific water quality-protection plan or a habitat-improvement plan for the GRWP (or a portion of the river course), and identify potential funding sources. An abundance of state, federal and private grant sources are available for this purpose and can be reviewed on-line through the DNR website (for water quality grants, search Water quality monitoring grants, announced and for habitat grants, search Other Funding Opportunities). The Pre-Application Project Review cited above may be helpful in identifying and developing such plans. This effort could also be coordinated with the stewardship legacy proposal referenced in point 3) below.

3) **Create a stewardship legacy**—The idea that a river system is to be viewed as a whole may be key to successfully marketing the GRWP. By including a value-added legacy component to broaden the scope of the project, more stakeholders can be drawn to the project adding greater legitimacy to the project goals. One suggestion would be to propose a collaborative effort to develop a comprehensive Grand River Waterway Corridor Plan.

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31 Hanshue, 85.

32 http://michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10364_52259_27415-80441--,00.html

33 http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,4570,7-153-10364_52259_27415-80441--,00.html
4) **Network** with the *Grand Valley Metro Council* that commissioned an extensive review of the lower Grand River published in a lengthy 2003 report titled the *Lower Grand River Watershed Management Plan*. This report provides a near textbook study on issues related to water quality, endangered species, regional planning, and is a good road map for a collective vision of how the lower Grand River watershed can be used and protected by the people of West Michigan. It is also a rich source to help identify potential stakeholders.  

One obvious group to connect with is the *Grand Rapids Restoration* (the whitewater group). Their method of community outreach and strategy for success could be instructive, not to mention the potential for a productive partnership. Network also with local interest groups and local, state and federal elected officials to enlist their support. Speak to service clubs (Rotary, Kiwanis, Exchange), economic development groups, local and regional planning groups such as the *West Michigan Regional Planning Commission* and the *Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW)*. Approach area DDA’s, and boating and fishing associations such as *West Michigan “Schrems” Chapter of Trout Unlimited* and the *Kalamazoo Valley Chapter*. The key to opening doors is finding that all-important common ground. All possible stakeholders should be identified and encouraged to participate and endorse the project. Examples abound that can be modeled as a template for building support, not the least of which is the *Grand Rapids white water project*. Another example is the effort led by Gina Donovan and her father to protect a stretch of the Neches River in east Texas. Their inspirational story involved an aggressive community campaign that partnered with anyone who was willing to help, especially those with influence in elective office. From gatherings in living rooms, church halls and schools, Gina’s efforts paid off with a letter-writing campaign that involved over 20,000 supporters who made phone calls and wrote emails and letters.  

A tangible part of any networking plan should include the circulation of a prepared resolution to various interest groups, local and regional boards and municipal and county governments for endorsement (see draft resolution Appendix B). It would be smart politics to meet with the *Grand Rapids Press* editorial board at the outset and solicit their support as well.  

**Funding Options**

Aside from the shared-cost option through the *USACE*, several possible funding sources can be explored. It should be noted that there is no provision in Michigan law for special assessments to fund river projects. There is, however, provision in Michigan’s landmark *NREPA* law that creates the Waterways Fund administered by the Waterways Commission and the *DNR*. Local governments can apply for grant funding for waterway projects including dredging. Grant applicants are scored according to a set of criteria set by the commission and if approved, projects are then placed in the DNR budget for appropriation.  

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37 MCL 324.78110, (iv) Studies and surveys necessary for the development of recreational boating facilities or the operation of recreational boating facilities, and the implementation of recommendations from these studies and surveys; (ix) Dredging, stump removal, and aquatic weed control when the activities can be shown to clear lanes to make a water body more accessible primarily for recreational boats as opposed to general navigation.
There is precedent for special appropriation to fund channel work on the Grand River dating back to the 1800’s. In 1838, the Michigan Legislature appropriated $30,000 for general improvements, and in 1840 the legislature appropriated another $25,000. This amounts to a combined value of $1.4M in today’s economy.

All possible funding sources should be explored. The Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority for instance recently approved a $100,000 grant for a Phase II feasibility study for the Grand Rapids white water project providing valuable seed money to assist this emergent community endeavor.

Legislative efforts to assist waterway project funding should also be vigorously explored. A bill passed in the Michigan legislature in April of 2008 (PA 94) had an innovative provision establishing a Water Improvement Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA). While this provision expired December 31, 2011, new legislation to reinstate and expand this provision has been introduced by Rep. Al Pscholka.

Conclusion

The history of the Grand River has come full circle. The investment of countless millions of dollars in water treatment has produced the relative cleanliness of today’s river, returning the waterway to its historic utility as a resource to be treasured and respected. And that makes The Grand River Waterway Project a true heir to the river stewardship that began decades ago. Once completed, the return on investment for this new venture will be its own enduring legacy.

An old Chinese proverb says a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. In the case of the Grand River Waterway Project, that single step leads to enhanced recreational opportunities for the people of West Michigan and a revitalized economy. There are only winners in this effort to make the Grand River more navigable and safe for boating and fishing. Once completed, it will be a gift that keeps on giving. Editor Paul Keep said it best, “Not taking the Grand River for granted will be an important theme.” And the time for that theme to play on the West Michigan stage is now!

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38 Chrysler, 8—12.
40 River Restoration of Glenwood Springs, CO posts this statement on its website: “There is potentially widespread support and funding opportunities available for a holistic project that is sensitive to the river environment and includes river recreation enhancement and fish habitat considerations. We will work with grant administrators, natural resource managers and potential stakeholders to uncover opportunities for a mutually supported project.” http://www.riverrestoration.org/services/index.html
41 House Bill No. 4640 (Dredging and removal of spoils is specifically added to the amended portion of the 2008 law, however, it only applies to a tributary to a Great Lake harbor up to 5 miles upstream from the harbor shoreline. (Also, the DPW Act 185 of 1957 should be reviewed as a possible means of bonding to pay for dredging costs or used as a model for new legislation to allow bonding for river dredging.)
### Table 1: Boating-related businesses residing in Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties

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<td>Storage, Marina, Clubs etc</td>
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<td>283</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boat Repair</td>
<td>20,082</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat Financing</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boat Dealers</td>
<td>143,184</td>
<td>304</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retailers</td>
<td>112,838</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sailing Instruction/Houseboat Rentals</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rentals</td>
<td>4,476</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,264</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2: Number of registered boats residing in Allegan, Kent, Muskegon and Ottawa Counties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boat Size</th>
<th>Power</th>
<th>Pontoon</th>
<th>PWC</th>
<th>Sail</th>
<th>Self-Propelled</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 16</td>
<td>31,551</td>
<td>191</td>
<td>13,936</td>
<td>1,342</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 - 20</td>
<td>29,669</td>
<td>4,577</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>994</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 23</td>
<td>5,019</td>
<td>2,269</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>215</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 - 26</td>
<td>2,593</td>
<td>2,090</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 - 29</td>
<td>1,043</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>209</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 - 40</td>
<td>1,763</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 +</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>71,638</td>
<td>9,241</td>
<td>13,936</td>
<td>3,686</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>98,618</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MSU Center for Recreation Marine Research, 2011.
Grand River Waterway Project
Draft Resolution

Resolution Supporting the Grand River Waterway Project

WHEREAS, we believe the imperative to encourage and facilitate economic development and job growth within our region to be of utmost importance, and;

WHEREAS, the Grand River has recently been the focus of renewed interest as a source of enhanced recreation, the consequence of which is an improved West Michigan economy, and;

WHEREAS, the resulting exponential growth in dollars generated from recreational boating and tourism and related commercial activity merits the support and influence of this body, and;

WHEREAS, the Grand River Waterway Project proposes to enhance shallow-draft navigation along a 22.5 mile stretch of the Grand River between the Fulton Street Bridge in Grand Rapids to the Bass River Tributary in Ottawa County for the purpose of improved recreational boating, and;

WHEREAS, the scenic and recreational value of this stretch of the Grand River has untapped potential to improve the quality of life for West Michigan residents, and;

WHEREAS, a sensitivity to the protection of water quality and fish and wildlife habitats along the river course is an integral part of the Grand River Waterway Project.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that _______________[NAME OF GROUP OR GOVT. BODY]______________ supports in concept all efforts to explore and implement the objectives of the Grand River Waterway Project.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that ___________[AUTHORIZING AGENT]__________ be directed to forward copies of this resolution to [THE GOVERNOR, AREA LAWMAKERS (STATE AND FEDERAL), AND BOTH U.S. SENATORS].