



Healthy Pine River - 2023 Annual Report

New during 2023;

- **HPR Director** – In an effort to expand our work the HPR board decided to hire a part-time director to guide our efforts in working on our waterways and environment. Brittany Sommerville, an Alma College graduate in Environmental Sciences will lead HPR. If you have not met Brittany please consider taking a moment to introduce yourself.
- **Expanded HPR board** – the board also decided to add four additional members that represent areas of expertise HPR will find beneficial. New members include: Ladean Anderson, administrator for the Gratiot Conservation District; Garnet Johnson; Operations Director for Triterra; Shadain Pink, representative of LEAPS-Alma College student environmental group; faculty representative from Alma College (Murray/Ben); and still seeking a member of our farming community. The HPR board meets monthly.
- **Municipal Funding Support** – 2023 saw the City of Alma, City of St. Louis, and the Gratiot County commissioners all support HPR with a monetary contribution for the work HPR does for our river and environment. We are hopeful this working relationship and funding will continue.
- **HPR meeting with speaker/topic focus** – the HPR board has made a commitment to bring in speakers for our membership meetings that can speak with an expertise on topics important to HPR and are willing to facilitate a Q & A session with our membership.
- **Social Surveying** – Dr. Ben Peterson's Public Policy classes were involved in researching the Pine River and the Alma impoundment and also did "social surveying" of residents on the impoundment along with community citizens and business leaders. This effort was to help provide insights into our citizens perceptions regarding the river and impoundment. Two specific finding that came out of the research and surveys; people know something is wrong with the river and impoundment, they just are not certain what it is.

- **State Street Dam & Alma Impoundment Research** – HPR hired two college interns Faron Grossman and Jaci Dietz to conduct research on the relationship between the State Street Dam and the impoundment waters behind the dam. This research will be valuable in better understanding what options realistically exist in trying to solve the ongoing degradation of the impoundment and river channel.
- **LEAPS student chapter at Alma College** – HPR entered into a working relationship with the LEAPS chapter at Alma College to bring younger members into HPR who were interested in working to improve the environment. A number of LEAPS members have been regulars at our monthly membership meetings and have been involved in interning for HPR in areas we are seeking specific research. We hope to be seeking similar results with our area schools during 2024.
- **Grants crafted and received in 2023**
 - EGLE Watershed Council grant** – this \$31,400 grant was awarded to HPR for capacity building in three specific areas: septic guidance for our rural communities and residences; connecting with our farming community; and incorporating outreach efforts to educate and inform our public.
 - Covid 19 Michigan Non Profit Association grant** – this grant was awarded to HPR to assist with the loss of revenue due to the reduction in meetings and contact with membership and the public due to Covid 19. HPR received \$10,000 in monetary assistance.
 - Gratiot County Community Foundation grant** – this grant was awarded to HPR for ongoing water testing and research for the State Street Dam and Alma impoundment. The \$7,500 grant award covered nearly all of the costs for our expanded summer water testing including testing intervals for the Pine River, and adding the City of St. Louis request that their impoundment area, Horse Creek and Pony Creek be tested to determine why the impoundment was experiencing such rapid degradation.

HPR will continue to seek out grant opportunities to help fund our priorities in 2024.

Continued HPR Practices for 2023

Membership dues - will remain the same for the 2024 year at \$5/person with the hope we will still receive donations to support our efforts. Our HPR memberships remained strong with more than 350 members contributing dues/donations during 2023.

Alma College Water Testing – was once again funded by HPR (\$8,000) and was expanded. See on our website the data from the summer water testing.

Septic Liaison – HPR continues to fund a septic liaison to work with our rural communities and residences in better understanding appropriate septic practices and the importance to not let septic systems leach into the river. Some contractors have been supportive of giving reduced costs for septic services to those assisted by our liaison.

Quarterly Newsletter – in an effort to keep our membership informed we have continued to craft and send a quarterly newsletter to our membership and other interested parties. This will continue in 2024.

Earth Day – HPR’s collaboration with WMLM and Padnos Metals continues to be a success as we turned in scrap metal from our citizens throughout the area that raised roughly \$2,000 for HPR this past spring. Stay tuned for Earth Day 2024 this coming spring.....and save that metal.

Financial Outlook during 2023 – HPR continued to be financially sound during the 2023 fiscal year. With solid membership dues and donations, municipal support, and the grant assistance mentioned earlier we have had strong financial help allowing HPR to fund projects important to us.

2023 HPR Priorities saw HPR focus on the following priorities/projects

Funding ongoing Alma College summer water testing

Fund a septic liaison to support residences in our rural areas

Continue to seek grant opportunities to fund HPR priorities/projects

Work to engage our farming community and area farm agencies

Continue to seek an EGLE permit to open up the Pine River/Honeyoye Creek confluence

Fund a research project regarding possible options for dealing effectively with the State Street Dam and Alma impoundment

Hire a part-time director for HPR that has the commitment and background to guide our efforts

Work to bring younger members into the HPR membership

Develop an Outreach model that works to inform and educate our public on the challenges the Pine River and its tributaries face

Special Note: HPR is always seeking volunteers to help with our ongoing commitment and mission to restore the Pine River and its tributaries to a healthy state. At times our volunteers are paid for the work they do. Please consider joining our efforts to make a difference in improving our waterways and environment for today, tomorrow, and our future generations.