



HPR Winter Newsletter

December 2024 - March 2025

Earth Day Metal Drive Coming Soon - This coming **Saturday, April 5th** bring your metal to the First Presbyterian Church parking lot at 495 Charles Avenue in Alma, **or call us for a pickup at 989-388-8070**. The HPR, Padnos, and LEAPS volunteers will have the dumpster at the Presbyterian Church parking lot with metal recycling being from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. Volunteers will be ready to help with unloading your vehicle... or, if needed coming to your location for a pickup. This is always a good community project giving residents a chance to get rid of metal products no longer needed.

<https://www.healthypineriver.org/metal/>.

Oil Spill in Gratiot County – On December 29, 2024 Emergency Management alerted residents that there was an oil pipeline break

in Arcada Township causing petroleum products to enter the county drain system. HPR hosted representatives from both the Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy (EGLE) and Wolverine Pipeline (owners of the pipeline) at two HPR membership meetings on January 9, 2025 and again on March 13, 2025. Both meetings were well attended by members and the public. The January meeting focused on the preliminary findings regarding the oil spill, containment measures, and company procedures and safeguards. The March meeting representatives provided greater detail in regard to the predicted spillage amount, future concerns with the pipeline, and the likely investigation into how it happened and who might be responsible. For more details visit <https://www.healthypineriver.org/membership/> and download the January 2025 and March 2025 Meeting Minutes PDF file.

Earth Day

Metal Recycling

JOIN US!

WHEN
April 5th
10am-2pm

ACCEPTING

- Iron
- Aluminum
- Tin
- Copper
- Steel

Anything Metal!

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We gladly accept both small and large donations. If needed, we also have vehicles available to assist with the transportation of your metal donations.

WHERE
First Presbyterian Church Parking Lot
495 Charles Ave, Alma

Healthy Pine River.org

Follow Healthy Pine River on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

LEAPS Hosts the March Membership Meeting – As HPR and LEAPS continue to grow our relationship through collaboration it was decided it would be beneficial for LEAPS to host a HPR monthly membership meeting. The March meeting was selected and proved to be a good one as they arranged to continue to meet with both EGLE and Wolverine Pipeline representatives regarding the December oil spill in Arcada Township. The audience was sizable (roughly 50 members, public, and college students) and the questions were excellent as the scope of the oil spill, containment procedures, prevention measures, and further investigation were all discussed. It was an excellent meeting hosted by LEAPS!



*The 1st grant workshop. Source: Alma College LEAPs Instagram Page.
https://www.instagram.com/p/DFwOPVxeo0/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link*

Grant Writing Workshops for Alma College – The LEAPS (Leadership for Environmental Awareness, Protection, and Sustainability) chapter at Alma College hosted two grant writing workshops for Alma College students this past February.

Dr. Sheryl Dixon, Dr. Ben Peterson, and Chuck Sandro, HPR were the presenters in trying to assist students in understanding the process of grant writing and how it could benefit them from a professional perspective if they were to add “grant writing” to their job skills. Lots of questions were discussed regarding grant

availability at the local, state, and federal level and the research and writing skills needed to be successful.

HPR Grants Update – Currently HPR is waiting to hear on three separate grants submitted to EGLE during this 2024-25 grant year. Two grants are focused on our watershed for approximately \$30,000 each, and a grant in collaboration with the City of Alma regarding a “feasibility study” on the Mill Pond and State Street Dam to learn what options we have in trying to restore the Mill Pond/River channel to a much healthier state and what impact does the State Street Dam have on the Mill Pond.

Pitch-er This! Contest – In our efforts to reach out to the younger generation HPR accepted an invite by United Way to join the **Pitch-er This!** Competition modeled after the TV program Shark Tank. Schools from Isabella and Gratiot Counties are invited to participate in the February 22nd competition held at the CMU Medical building on the Central Michigan University campus. (Continued on Next Page.)

Pitch-er This! Contest (cont.) - Our Alma student team of four consisted of Reagan Falor, senior; Allison Sandro, 9th grader; Ainsley Falor, 8th grader; and Ella Johnson, 6th grader. Guiding the Alma Team was retired Alma Public School teacher Sara Miller and Alma College Vista Volunteer Zoe Palmer. The girls chose the name **The Pine River Protectors** and focused on the struggling health of the Pine River as their project topic. The girls had a month to prepare their presentations for the judges along with also putting together a display showcasing their project theme.

The Pine River Protectors presented first and took second place in the overall competition. The judges must have been impressed as the Alma team earned a fully funded scholarship of \$5,000 to put towards developing Pine River presentations for secondary students at Alma High School and Middle School. Congratulations Reagan, Allison, Ainsley, and Ella for representing HPR so well and earning the scholarship to prepare the Pine River presentations!

To learn more about this year's "Pitch-er This!" competition results, visit <https://www.uwgic.org/success-stories/pitch-er-this-celebrates-10-years>.

Spring Septic Assistance – This spring Mikie VanHorn our HPR septic liaison will be focusing her work on the community of Elwell. Mikie's efforts to provide residents on/near the Pine River with septic assistance has touched over 300 households in the communities of Riverdale, Sumner, and Elm Hall. Mikie has been instrumental in assisting residents in obtaining local septic contractor help when needing service; often at discounted rates. Through Mikie's work we are trying to eventually eliminate one of the main contamination factors in the Pine River....human waste from faulty septic systems.

For information on safe septic practices visit <https://www.healthypineriver.org/information-and-education/safe-septic-practices/>. Information on this page is sourced from our local Mid-Michigan District Health Department (MMDHD) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).



2025 HPR Membership Drive – HPR is nearing completion of their annual membership drive which began with the start of the new-year and is nearing completion at the end of March. If you have not sent your dues in yet, please do so as HPR depends heavily on member dues and donations to fund the priorities and projects we identify each year. It also helps greatly when your organization has a significant number of members when advocating for environmental issues. You can find our membership information on our website on <https://www.healthypineriver.org/dues/>.



HPR “Friends of the Pine River” Campaign – On March 13th HPR hosted a Before Hours Breakfast Event for approximately 50 participants from the Gratiot Area Chamber of Commerce and the Gratiot Young Professionals. The purpose was to engage our business community in an outreach effort in regards to providing an update on the Pine River and in seeking their funding support for our projects and priorities. To date we have had fifteen responses giving over \$9,000 in helping us meet a United Way \$10,000 matching grant initiative. We believe there are still some donations yet to come, so we are very pleased with our “Friends of the Pine River” campaign to date.

Thanks Jack Veverka for HPR Posters – A special thank you goes out to Alma College recent graduate and LEAPS member Jack Veverka for creating five new large posters for HPR that were on display for our Before Hours Breakfast Event for Gratiot Area chamber members and Gratiot Young Professionals. Jack designed and created the narratives for each poster on topics including: A 20 year summary of Pine River water testing; HPR Outreach Efforts; Downstream Impacts of Contamination; Communities Septic Service; and Barr Engineering Bathymetry Study. The posters will be on display at our April 10th membership meeting.

Leadership & Volunteerism - Fundamental to HPR’s success are members willing to volunteer and give some of their time to continue to make HPR an effective organization. Like all organizations trying to make a difference, we need folks to pitch in to help. We need to continue to grow our volunteer base particularly, so it represents all age groups and stakeholder groups. Please consider giving your time for a very worthwhile cause, a great group of people, and a brighter future for our upcoming generations.

<https://www.healthypineriver.org/volunteer/>.

HPR April 10th Membership Meeting – Our April 10th meeting will be an important one as Alma College professors Murray Borrello and Ben Peterson lead the meeting in gaining feedback from our members for two important projects involving the Great Lakes Watershed Institute and “advocacy efforts” with our local, state, and federal politicians. We hope you will join us as we discuss and seek direction in water and environmental related issues.

HPR 2024-25 Priorities – Also at our April 10th meeting will be the 2024-25 projects/priorities that HPR is working on. We would appreciate any feedback you can provide us as we focus our efforts and resources on these river/watershed issues. Please see the bullet points below.

- **Annual Water Testing** – to continue to understand the contamination/pollution levels in the Pine River and throughout the watershed.
- **Outreach** – to continue to inform and educate our communities/townships/county leaders, residents, recreationalists, and students regarding the issues facing the Pine River, our watershed, and the impact on our communities and citizens.
- **Septic Engagement** – continue our liaison work with our rural communities and residents on/near the Pine River in understanding proper septic practices and available services.
- **Farming Engagement** – continue our efforts to engage our farming community and farm agencies in understanding and assisting with Pine River and watershed issues.
- **Funding for the Dam/River channel Feasibility Study** – locating funding to move forward with a dam/river channel feasibility study to assist the City of Alma and Alma residents in understanding options available for the restoration of the river channel/impoundment.
- **Sustainability** – finding funding support for HPR that provides the opportunities to continue work on projects and priorities.
- **Advocacy** – working to support initiatives and direction that is healthy for our environment and waterways.

