



# CATALYST

FALL 2022



**After:** The Skinner Road crossing was upgraded to a wider, longer bottomless aluminum arch culvert, returning the natural width of the North Branch of the Platte as it flows under the roadway.

## Fish Fight:

**Persistence, planning and partnership help the Platte River watershed win back fish passage and clear water**

In 2019, the CRA, the Benzie County Road Commission and a diverse partner collaborative restored nine problematic road/stream crossings in the prized Platte River watershed. This massive effort centered on the river's North Branch as well as Kinney, Brundage, Little Platte Lake and Carter creeks.

Outdated metal culverts, boilerplate pipes and cracked concrete structures blocked fish passage and dumped excessive sediment into Benzie County's pristine streams. Some structures were set on top of the streambeds, making waterfalls and jumps too fast for young fish and sensitive species like brook trout to swim against.

Roadbed embankments were often vertical and funneled sediment during heavy rainfall events. Four years of persistent fundraising, community engagement and collaborative planning restored these nine crossings – a monumental achievement for the Platte River watershed and all who enjoy it. *(continued on page 3)*



**Before:** An old, undersized boilerplate pipe was removed at the Skinner Road crossing over the North Branch of the Platte, clearing the way for a much larger culvert.

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## About CRA

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In 1968, Conservation Resource Alliance was established with one goal – to preserve and protect Northern Michigan’s waterways, wildlife, and forests for future generations. CRA is a private, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization. Through our River Care™ and Wild Link™ programs, we restore and protect over 700 miles of rivers, 5,000 miles of tributaries and diverse forests throughout 4 million acres in Northern Michigan.

We’ve been able to care for this region’s natural resources because our partners and supporters continue to be the backbone of our organization. Thank you to all of our donors for supporting hands-on feet-wet conservation. If you haven’t donated, please join us. Your commitment is critical to keep this important work moving forward.

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### Sue Antaya

Accounting

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Biologist/Project Manager

### Amy Beyer

Director

### Aubri Brown

Administrative and Development Assistant

### Kat Hanson

Development Director

### Gavin MacDonald

Development & Communications

### Chris Pierce

Biologist/Project Manager

### Michael Seefried

Field Technician/Operations

### DJ Shook

Biologist/Project Manager

### Nate Winkler

Biologist/Project Manager



[www.rivercare.org](http://www.rivercare.org)

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## From Amy's Desk

**Nature nerds. Science geeks. River rats.** At the heart of it all, that’s how we roll at CRA. Even though we love the engineering, ecology and data of what we do, our small-but-mighty team has one quality that underpins it all: Passion for river restoration.

Since 1968, that underlying passion has attracted a team of people that stands out in the fields of fisheries, habitat management and river science. Our team’s professional reputation is broadly respected. People who love our rivers count on CRA’s results-oriented staff to build consensus and tackle complex issues.

This summer, Project Manager **Chris Pierce** was awarded his credential under a stream hydrology apprenticeship registered for the first time by the U.S. Department of Labor. Chris and his colleagues at CRA have been pursuing the highest level of training and competency in this fast-changing technical field, which is central to CRA’s river restoration mission.

Along with its specialists, the CRA team is stacked with the best utility fielders. Our accounting wiz, **Sue Antaya** designed our beautiful new office featuring the Jerry Gates painting collection. Sue can also learn any software for any device that anyone can produce and has been asked – begged really – to teach a course on nonprofit audit prep.

Assistant **Aubri Brown** can get you pointed toward anything from native trees to wildlife rescue centers, all while planning fun events and keeping our board schedule running.

Wild Roots Leader and Technician **Michael Seefried** can fix anything, organize everything and figure out complex tech and data problems that defy the rest of us. (Must be that math degree.)

Our team takes pride in being agile, resourceful and reliable. You can trust us to finish what we start. What I most appreciate about our small team is that we have each other’s backs – problems are often solved before I can ask. Throughout these last two very unusual years, I’ve heard only “Yes, I can” from our team – what a gift! Focused yet flexible; trustworthy, good-humored and passionately rooted in the best scientific practices. **That’s Team CRA!**

Director

## New Faces at CRA



CRA welcomes **Gavin MacDonald**, CRA’s new Development and Communications Coordinator. Gavin is a nonprofit professional with multiple years of marketing, administrative and fundraising experience from organizations across the state of Michigan. In addition to a Master of Science in Administration, Gavin holds a B.S. in psychology, a minor in professional sales and a certificate in corporate video creation from Central Michigan University. His childhood in Alpena fostered an unwavering appreciation for Michigan’s pristine natural resources and wild places.



**Aubri Brown** began as an intern for CRA in March 2022 and her hard work earned her a position not only as an Administrative and Development Assistant and but also as a member of the development and communications team.

Aubri enjoys foraging and growing her own food to live as harmoniously with the planet as possible. The beautiful waters and the lush forests of Michigan have become some of her favorite places to be.

## Fish Fight: *(continued)*

### Wins for the Platte River watershed:

**Nature's design restored.** More than 10 miles of upstream reaches are now fully reconnected with 19 miles of downstream tributaries and the Platte River mainstem, along with Little and Big Platte lakes. All aquatic species at all life stages during ordinary and high-water flows now have full passage. New structures span the inherent stream widths, which enable organic movement of gravel, sand and trees downstream.

**Erosion halted and sediment stopped.** An estimated 25 tons of sediment no longer spill into the watershed because of gradually sloped, stabilized and revegetated road embankments. This sediment was burying instream gravel beds and large woody debris, which are important habitats for fish and other aquatic species. Runoff is diverted to nearby low areas and away from the streams via roads that are crowned, paved or supplemented with diversion spillways.

### A special thank you to these partners for helping make the Platte restoration a reality!

- Great Lakes Fishery Trust
- Oleson Foundation
- Walters Family Foundation
- Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa & Chippewa Indians through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program with Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Benzie County Road Commission
- Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service through the Great Lakes Fish & Wildlife Restoration Act and Fish Passage Programs
- Freshwater Future Healing Our Waters – Great Lakes Coalition Program
- Benzie Conservation District
- Platte Lake Improvement Association
- Trout and Salmon Foundation
- Adams Chapter of Trout Unlimited
- KPM Engineering, PLLC
- CRA's River Care Program supported by DTE Energy Foundation
- The George Fund
- Andrew R. and Janet F. Miller Foundation
- Serra Family Foundation
- Packaging Corporation of America
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation through the Sustain Our Great Lakes Program



CRA's Executive Director Amy Beyer talks with Paul Keiswetter at his farm in Emmet County.

## Emmet County Excursion

A busy summer at CRA was dotted with a few adventures! Paul Keiswetter – a long-time friend of CRA – of Petoskey Plastics invited some CRA staffers out to his farm in Emmet County. The early August meeting at Maple River Farm was filled with an unforgettable tour, a fantastic lunch and (of course) a few hunting stories.

Paul's favorite watershed in CRA's service region is without a doubt the Maple River. Aside from hunting and fishing near the watershed, he enjoys the simple tranquility the river gives him.

"It is truly a sanctuary offering a place to enjoy peace and nature," he says, adding that he believes anything of value comes with the responsibility to protect and manage it.

Paul says that he especially sees the value in Michigan's pristine watersheds.

"CRA is that special organization that watches over our treasured natural assets," he says. "It is our duty to help and support CRA where we can."

As both a businessman and a philanthropist, Paul gives back to benefit the greater good. **Thank you for all you do for CRA and beyond, Paul!**



– Happy 30th CRA Anniversary Amy! –

# On the Horizon

**CRA is proud to be taking on projects all over our 15-watershed service region. The following are a few projects that are next up on our agenda. With your continued support, these projects and others in our workplan will be completed, ensuring preservation of Northwest Michigan's Rivers for generations.**

## Ottaway's (Boardman) North Branch

Construction of a new channel-spanning timber bridge crossing at Broomhead Road on the Ottaway (Boardman) River is underway. The removal of the narrow culvert will eliminate a velocity barrier to the passage of many aquatic species, including the many brook trout in the region. The new bridge will also lessen excess bank erosion and sediment build-up in the river's bed. CRA Biologist and Project Manager Nate Winkler grew up exploring the Ottaway near the Broomhead Road site, spending his formative years fishing and swimming in the river. He is thrilled to see the site getting the love it deserves! Nate appreciates fellow Project Managers Kimberly Blake and D.J. Shook for their efforts in leading the transformation of this section of the river.



**An excavator hauls away the old culvert from the Broomhead Road site back in early August. A new channel-spanning timber bridge will take its place.**

## Jordan River

A massive restoration effort is currently underway to replace three crossings over the Jordan River and Deer Creek with full-channel timber bridges. The crossings are located at Jordan River Road East and West over the Jordan River and Fuller Road over Deer Creek. With the design phase completed, we are working with strong community and agency partners on a robust fundraising campaign to ensure construction will begin in 2023. The goal is to bundle the three crossings together under one project for maximum efficiency. The Jordan River is Lake Charlevoix's largest tributary; this crucial restoration work will have a significant impact on the entire Great Lakes region.



**A narrow culvert in need of replacement on Fuller Road.**

## Pere Marquette River

The Pere Marquette railroad stabilization project continues to be a high priority for CRA. We continue to work with the landowners, community and agency partners to move the project forward. The final engineered design includes placing natural fieldstone along the toe, planting shrubs on the bank and throughout the rock, and excavating a larger bankfull bench on the opposite side of the river to match the reference reach stream dimensions. This restoration project is crucial for the future of the Pere Marquette to ensure it remains a beloved gem.



**Anglers float by the eroding streambank at the Pere Marquette Railroad Stabilization Site.**



**Construction begins on Robinson Road in late August with a Full-Channel timber Bridge coming soon.**

## Maple River

Many said that full connectivity couldn't be achieved on the main stem of the Maple River. It was called "too expensive and too complicated." We took those doubts as a challenge and are happy to report that we are only three road/stream crossing replacements away from freeing the Maple River! This summer Robinson Road over the East Branch will be replaced with a beautiful full-channel timber bridge; Douglas Lake Road is slated to be replaced next year. CRA is also constructing a new culvert on Van Creek at the MDNR bike trail crossing this fall. These three crossings complete the connection of more than 60 miles of stream, the benefits of which will be felt for generations to come.

# Thank You for Your Support!

The following individuals and organizations made a contribution to CRA since the release of our last Newsletter.

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In memory of My Mom, Nancy Middleton  
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## Thank You

CRA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit and all donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent of the law.



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# – STEWARDSHIP SPOTLIGHT –

## Earth Day Connections

On the first Earth Day in 1970, Susan Hayes Affholter picked up litter along Mill Street and Robinson Road in Pellston.

On Earth Day 2022, she picked up seedlings from CRA’s Wild Roots initiative to increase the native plant population in that region.

“We are supposed to be caretakers of the land, not takers,” she says.

Ironically, Susan first learned about CRA along those same roads where she was picking up litter. While staying at a family home in Pellston in 2015, Susan watched the installation of a spanning bridge, allowing the Maple River to flow naturally again. After talking with Project Manager Chris Pierce, Susan became a supporter of CRA. Since that time, she has been an incredible supporter of projects and the work that CRA does.

Being a steward of the land runs in Susan’s family. Susan describes her mother, Vada McRae Hayes, as “an environmentalist in her own right.”

“She would take us into the woods to look at wildflowers, which we were told not to pick,” she says. “She also pointed out that the few trilliums that we saw were endangered. To understand that something can be lost forever is a profound lesson.”

In early 1970, Susan’s mother was instrumental in stopping oil drilling on public land along the Maple River. Had that drilling been allowed, who is to say what that area may look like today? Thanks to Vada, Susan and a host of other CRA supporters, the Maple now flows free.



**Susan Hayes Affholter at the historic Lake Kathleen Dam Removal Site – Woodland Road over the Maple River.**