The Economic Impact of the Huron River

Fox River Summit • Burlington, Wisconsin • 23 March, 2018
My life in watersheds
A “Working” River
A Huron River Renaissance

Turning our communities toward the river to transform the Huron River corridor into a premier destination in Michigan and the Great Lakes.
Seed and Development

Startup

Expansion

Growth and Establishment

Maturity and Possible Exit
Goals

- Stimulate local economies
- Improve recreational access and opportunities
- Encourage physical activity
- Improve community pride and encourage partnerships
- Make the river and communities healthier
- Highlight cultural and historical significance
A river renaissance is taking place in the cities and towns along the Huron River. RiverUp! is a river revitalization initiative with the goal of making the river the new Main Street where residents and tourists recreation, live, gather, commute, and do business.
1. The river is drinkable, swimmable, fishable, and floatable.
2. The public has points of access to the river.
3. An organization can be home to the effort.
4. A base of stewardship exists for raising funds and trail maintenance.
5. The right people are involved or ready to build alliances.

Critical Elements
Founded in 1965, HRWC protects and restores the river for healthy and vibrant communities.
STUDY
We monitor chemistry and flow, assess habitat, and identify plants and river bugs that are sensitive to changes in the environment to gauge the health of land and water throughout the watershed.

PROTECT
We use our data to make informed recommendations to decision makers and practitioners on policy and other ways they can support clean water.

RESTORE
In the watershed we give nature a chance to recover. For example, we restore habitat, remove dams, and turn artificially straightened creek channels into curvy creeks to benefit aquatic life.

CONNECT
We connect people to the river by providing information and volunteer opportunities. We also work with local governments and businesses to feature the scenic Huron River in their communities and promote recreation.

BIOLOGICAL AND HABITAT MONITORING
We have been monitoring our watershed’s rivers and creeks for over 20 years so we can carefully track changes in our water. River Roundup volunteers work with our scientists to collect and identify river creatures, take water samples, and assess stream habitat.

CHEMISTRY AND FLOW MONITORING
Volunteers collect water samples and take flow measurements. We lead this program for communities in the Middle Huron Initiative (MHI), the Alliance for Downriver Watersheds, and the Livingston Watershed Advisory Group (WAG).

NATURAL AREAS ASSESSMENTS AND PROTECTION
We partner with local communities, land conservancies, and property owners to assess and protect natural areas. We then work on creative solutions to protect high quality natural areas.

RIVERUP!
We partner with businesses, governments, and community leaders to

CLIMATE CHANGE
We bring together community partners to examine the changing climate and how

WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLANNING
One of our core functions is to create
Seed and Development

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RiverUp! Huron River Watershed Council
Raising the Funds

**Capital Campaign I: 2012-2015**

- Grants
- **Private Foundations**
- **Community Foundations**
- Businesses
- **Individual Donors/Campaign Cabinet**
- Municipal and Federal Contributions
Huron River Renaissance Launched in Michigan by Business and Community Leaders
RiverUp! project launched to fix up recreation infrastructure, clean up areas in need of restoration, and build destination spots that bring people to the riverfront.

USA TODAY
A Gannett Company

AP NEWS
Latest local, national & international news from the Associated Press

Huron River restoration advocates set park event
Aug. 3, 2011, 4:02 a.m. EDT
Associated Press
ANN ARBOR, Mich. (AP) — A group promoting restoration of the Huron River for canoeists, kayakers and other recreational users is inviting the public to an event aimed at reviving the river.
06-16-2011 / Andy Bachsbaum

the ann arbor chronicle

RiverUp! Focuses on Revitalizing Huron River
Missioners also discuss Argo Dam, Fuller Road Station

STATE SIDE
with Cynthia Canty

Development News
RiverUp! to improve river health and recreation for Huron River communities

ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Huron River restoration advocates are set to kick off a park event this week aimed at reviving the river as a popular destination for canoeists, kayakers, and other recreational users.

The Huron River Renaissance, launched in Michigan by business and community leaders, will host an event on Aug. 3 to fix up recreation infrastructure, clean up areas in need of restoration, and build destination spots that bring people to the riverfront.

RiverUp! project is a mission to create the river as a recreational hub, with the goal of improving river health and recreation for Huron River communities.

That's because while many sections of the Huron River are terrific for recreation, some dangerous dams and tricky portages around them make paddling the entire river a rather harrowing experience.

Today, if a paddler wanted to take a trip down all 104 navigable miles of the Huron River, she'd need a couple of things beyond the standard paddling equipment: some sturdy hiking boots and nerves of steel.

That's because while many sections of the Huron River are terrific for recreation, some dangerous dams and tricky portages around them make paddling the entire river a rather harrowing experience.

"Some really intrepid paddlers have done it," says Elizabeth Riggs of the Huron River Watershed Council.

But the HRWC — as well as the many communities through which the Huron River runs — would prefer that all of the approximately 10,000 recreational paddlers who utilize the river each year also have the opportunity to explore the entire river. That's why the Ann Arbor-based non-profit is leading the way to create The Huron River Watershed Council.
• Build strong, economically vital communities
  #1 amenity for potential homeowners

• Provide communities with a valuable amenity
  Increase housing values

• Revitalize neighborhoods
  Spur development in adjacent sites

• Build local businesses
  Trail users spend money

Economic Benefits of Trails
River Recreation Pays
Pulse of the Region Survey on Parks

“Parks have a positive impact on my quality of life.”

95% Strongly Agree

“I visit parks for…”

- Trails: 81%
- Picnic Areas: 63%
- Biking: 58%
- Swimming beaches: 53%
- Paddle sports: 50%

“I would like to see more…"

- Parks near my home
- Canoe, kayak, and paddle board launches
- Parks near the water
- Parks that connect by trails
- Hiking and biking trails

Source: Southeast Michigan Council of Governments
City of Ann Arbor Canoe Liveries

- Largest livery operation in Michigan
- Over 2,000 customers on a busy weekend day
- 80,000 – 100,000 people rent boats annually
- 550 boats + 50 tubes
City of Ann Arbor Canoe Liveries

- Two liveries
- Gear rentals for stillwater, cascades, river trips
- River camps, festivals, and programs
- Concessions, coffee shop
- 100 seasonal employees
City of Ann Arbor Canoe Liveries

Revenue

Expenses

People
Seed and Development

Startup

Growth and Establishment

Expansion

Maturity and Possible Exit
Capital Campaign II: 2015-2018

✓ Grants
✓ Private Foundations
✓ Community Foundations
✓ Businesses
✓ Individual Donors/Campaign Cabinet
✓ Municipal and Federal Contributions
Improve River Health

• Fishery habitat restoration
• River clean-ups
• Woody debris management
• Osprey nesting habitat
• River flows management
Invest in River Recreation

- Improve river access
- Offer universal accessibility
- Offer a high-quality experience
Transform the River Corridor

- Land + water trails connectivity
- Reclaim blighted riverfront properties
- Inspired design
- Heritage interpretation
MRPA PROfessional QUARTERLY

National Designation
Huron River Water Trail

Ypsilanti Township’s Lakeside Park, City of Trenton Parks and Recreation, and Canton to Reduce Utility Expenses.
MRPA Receives $1.1 Million Grant for Hurricane Relief.

2015 Michigan National Water Trails Forum
A 104-mile inland paddling trail connecting people to the river’s natural environment, its history, and the communities it touches in Michigan’s Lower Peninsula.
At the heart of it are cities and towns that have made a commitment to the Huron River Water Trail, creating fun destinations where trail users can venture off the trail to enjoy the scenery, services, heritage, and character of a community.
Trail Towns
Grow Businesses
Meet the Huron River Water Trail—104 miles of inland paddling and five Trail Towns to welcome you—designated a National Water Trail by the National Park Service. Connect to the river’s natural environment, its history and the communities it touches in SOUTHEAST MICHIGAN. From rapids to placid flat water, from small town to city, a variety of adventures await.

**TRAiL TOiNS**

**Milford**  RIVER MILES 100-98  
Charming downtown • Cycling trails • Riverside cultural events

**Dexter**  RIVER MILES 63-61  
Convenient launch • Challenging rapids • Shops and dining

**Ann Arbor**  RIVER MILES 23-46  
Exciting cascades and stillwater trips • Equipment rentals • Scenic parks

**Ypsilanti**  RIVER MILES 43-35  
Automotive heritage • Unique shops and dining • Scenic parks

**Flat Rock**  RIVER MILES 19-6  
Scenic riverside parks • Cycling trails • History and cultural events

Plan your trip with our waterproof Paddler’s Companion or at huronriverwatertrail.org.
Key Questions

1. What is the economic value of river-based recreation?
2. What is the economic value of ecosystem services?
Recreation Value

Use surveys to determine the economic impact, number of users, and, if possible, the “consumer value” of recreation.

- **Survey of users**
  (Used to value use per user)
  - How much spent?
  - How far come?
  - How much earn?
  - How often come?

- **Survey of average local**
  (Used to determine number of users)
  - Did you use the river?
  - How often?
Results from User Survey

- $29.9 million in direct spending by visitors
- $23.6 million in indirect and induced spending (Multiplier effect)
- $53.5M in annual economic output
- 2.6 million visitor days
- 641 local jobs added to the region

SURVEY RESPONDENT ZIP CODES
- Non-local: 43%
- Ann Arbor: 28%
- Dexter: 13%
- Flat Rock: 13%
- Milford: 2%
- Ypsilanti: 1%
Hedonic Valuation (Property Sale)

Statistically breaks up the characteristics of a property

• **House Characteristics**
  • Size
  • Design
  • Condition

• **Neighborhood Characteristics**
  • Schools
  • Community

• **Environmental**
Results

Proximity to the Huron River increased housing value by:

- 39% in Oakland County (average of $82,767)
- 65% in Wayne County (average of $123,380)
- Applied to all properties along the river yields almost $630 million in amenity value
Benefits Transfer

Uses values calculated elsewhere to estimate a value locally:

- Recreation
- Biological Diversity
- Wetland Flood Reduction

Values adjusted for differences between study area and local area.

Used for hard or expensive to calculate values; less accurate than primary studies.
## Overall Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Annual Economic Impact</th>
<th>Annual Economic Value of Services</th>
<th>Total Economic Value of Services</th>
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<td>Recreation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biological Diversity</td>
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<td>Wetland Flood Reduction</td>
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Key Messages

1. A clean, healthy river is worth investing in by business, governments, and individuals.

2. The Huron River supports recreation tourism, and businesses that generate substantial income for the local economy. It is a vital economic driver.

3. The Huron River, and its RiverUp! placemaking work, is part of Michigan’s Blue Economy.
Challenges

• Maintaining engagement of partners
• Safety
• Etiquette
• Crowds in high-use sections
• Water levels
• Large woody debris
What we have learned

- Get creative
- Share the vision again and again, and again
- Achieve short-term successes and be persistent
- Plan for trail maintenance
- Program to reach the future majority
- Placemaking via trails and economic development = nonpartisan
Thank you!

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