



April 2018

**CTRA ANNUAL MEETING May 10<sup>th</sup> 6:30-8PM Cascade Library Wisner Center**

**Agenda May 10<sup>th</sup> 6:30-8pm**

- 6:20 Petitions Available for signing
- \$5 *Purchase river maps, they save propellers!!!*
- 6:30 Welcome Call to order
- Secretary/Treasurers Reports
- Election of new board members
- Petition/SAD Update
- Navigation/channel
- Water Quality Discussion
- Summer Event - Fireworks?
- New Business
- Raffle off a few items

**River Draw Down**

**October 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> & April 2019 12<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>**

This is what remains of Pebble Island. The island that forms Dead Man's Pass near the train bridge. The spring flooding and ice have washed about a third of the island downstream and seriously changed the river bottom. More at the meeting...



**BOAT LAUNCHING AVAILABLE TO MEMBERS:** Any river property owner who is a member of the association, with legal access to the river, may now pay an additional \$100 annual fee to have spring launch and fall retrieval access of their watercraft. Some rules and restrictions apply. You can pay online, and to schedule use of the ramp please email the board at [cascadethornapple@gmail.com](mailto:cascadethornapple@gmail.com) a week's notice in advance of the need is much appreciated. (Please remember a week is longer than 15 minutes) Heavy rains may cause delays or potential rescheduling that is beyond our control.

**SAD - PETITION UPDATE** We are in need of about 30 signatures. We are thankful for everyone's efforts and wish to collect remaining signatures. The annual meeting will be the last opportunity to sign this petition prior to the township submission. After the township reviews it, they will decide whether to proceed to public hearings and create a special assessment district (SAD). The SAD is being requested to create funds for the cleanup and reduction of weeds and muck in our river. Please come to the annual meeting to make sure we have your signature! You may just swing in to sign, if you can't stay for the whole meeting. Thanks for your dedication and help in this large task/effort. We have been particularly careful in this process to make sure it is done correctly.



**BOARD MEMBERS NEEDED-** The CTRA board is stale. We need new exciting people to help decide the direction the association moves in. Most of the current board members have been on the board for 6-10 years. The commitment is small. We will meet about 2-3 times a year, typically quarterly. After an election at the annual meeting the board decides positions at a board meeting. It is very easy going; we even meet on the boat sometimes. Please consider this if you have never served. My dad used to tell me everyone on the river has to "do their time" at some point. You may contact Scott at [cascadethornapple@gmail.com](mailto:cascadethornapple@gmail.com) if you have any questions or an interest in the board. New people with new ideas keep things moving and exciting. Please help let some of the members take a much needed break.

Send your 2018 dues of \$50.00 Payable to the CTRA or pay online.

Cascade Thornapple River Assoc.  
PO BOX 888401  
Grand Rapids MI 49588

Pay online right now and save a stamp!  
[www.cascadethornapple.org](http://www.cascadethornapple.org)

2018 Dues 4-1-18 thru 3-31-19 \$50  
2018 Boat Launch membership upgrade \$100  
FALL FIREWORKS DONATION Saturday after Labor Day \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Our 2017 Fireworks required about \$2,200 in donations. This event is held in the fall and further details are provided at the annual meeting and in the summer email newsletter. The board has no plans to have this event this year; the membership will make that decision at the annual meeting.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ We only send about 4/year!

**OBJECTS in the water +++ The floods this spring brought a ton of debris with them.** Update at annual meeting. The CTRA board began trying to contact a barge company to help remove trash and trees from the river in the fall. At this time the soonest we suspect any efforts will occur will be in July. Very few companies are interested in doing this work. More about this at the annual meeting.

**DAM PROBLEMS!**

Some of us this spring received a visit from authorities warning us of a possible failure of the 84<sup>th</sup> St LaBarge Dam. The dam was constructed about 1901. Our understanding of the events is that the chains on one of the two flood gates failed. The owner rejected other methods to open the broken gate. Only one flood gate was opened significantly reducing the capacity. The water above the dam rose to over 4' higher than the usual level. This caused the berm of soil on the east side of the dam to become unstable. The concern was this berm would wash out and send a large flow downstream to Cascade Dam. The operators of the Ada and Cascade Dams had staff watching in the event the berm let go. As part of the action plan the water level above the Cascade Dam was run lower than usual. In the event of failure, the Cascade and Ada dams would immediately open all the way. The berm held and disaster was avoided. Today the question remains: Did the owner of LaBarge Dam do sufficient routine maintenance or was neglect a factor? The flooding this spring was significant but not quite a record for that dam. Irving, Middleville, and LaBarge Dams where breached in this event. All three are owned by the same company. The CTRA board has reached out to see if anyone has verified if the flood gate that failed to open at LaBarge has been repaired. To date none of the washout damage at Middleville dam has been repaired or stabilized. I can say that I was impressed and thankful the LaBarge Dam held as much water back as it did. We hope to have an update at the annual meeting.

Right photo of LaBarge Dam as water runs over top of dam including the closed East Gate, and around building. (White building in left side of foreground is the gaging station for the water level. They can be viewed thru the links page of our web site. Left photo, soil washed out around end of Middleville Dam as water over tops the structure.



**CTRA ANNUAL MEETING May 10<sup>th</sup> 6:30-8PM Cascade Library Wisner Center**

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT: Airport Storm Water Update:**

This winter some scum, fats, oils, and foam have been noted on the water again. We again contacted the DEQ and let them know via pictures about our concerns. The system at the airport was under water almost all spring and summer of 2017. The system failed. My understanding is the pipes are clogging with algae. Several were replaced as a fix in the fall of 2017. I have contacted the DEQ and airport numerous times to request a stakeholder meeting so we can be updated on what is being done to fix the problems. No one has answered that request. I am told the system was bypassed most of 2017, and a little bit this winter particularly during heavy rain and snowmelt times. We will continue to monitor the system as best we can. So far the only new things noticed have been numerous sheens on the water during the summer months that appear to be an "oil slick"; all 4 reported events have been north of I96.

Recently news broke about the possibility of PFAS in well water around the airport. In 2013 the CTRA tested a well in the neighborhood near Tanglewood. We did not know to test for PFAS at that time. We did however know the airport used high nitrate deicers in the past on the runways. We found that wells in that neighborhood seem to have elevated levels of nitrates and other things, as compared to those farther away from the airport. We informed the DEQ of the findings and requested they take a more comprehensive look at well water in the area. Our plea was ignored. While currently many people are scrambling to test water, we have not heard of anyone having a result higher than the recommended limits. After we did our testing it was quite clear to me that the airport has and will affect the ground water in the area. If you have a concern you should test your water, Cascade Township's website has some great information for those who are worried. The problem is the same as it was in 2013. Had we known about PFAS then we could have looked for it. Our plea to the DEQ was that a more comprehensive look is necessary before we dump this storm water in the river. This PFAS well scare is the same thing, and why we wanted more research done. At this time the river has not been tested for PFAS to our knowledge. It was interesting to note that at drawdown there was white foam on the west shore of the river for over a mile. It started near the same creek shown with foam in the Wood TV8 report, and extended downstream. The oddity here is no concentration of foam like that appeared anywhere on the river from Kilmer to the dam during the rest of drawdown. I believe water quality will be an ongoing issue, particularly downstream of the main airport discharge.

If people notice things out of the ordinary we ask that you document and photograph the observations and send them to the association at [cascadethornapple@gmail.com](mailto:cascadethornapple@gmail.com). It is very, VERY, HELPFUL for people to report odors and other things not normally seen.

### **SPECIAL ASSESSMENT DISTRICT FACTS (SAD)**

This assessment's exact detail will be determined and discussed through public hearings at Cascade Township. Funds will be collected as needed and the dollar amount each year may fluctuate based on annual costs (not to exceed \$300 per year). If no projects are conducted or we as property owners wish to end the assessment earlier than the 15 years it may. Our goal is to work with the township to have projects chosen to maintain or improve the current health and recreational value of the river. This not only benefits the river, but all of us as property owners, by maintaining and increasing property values.

#### **Weeds**

Preliminary estimates show costs of around \$50,000-\$70,000 annually for aquatic weed management. We will not treat and remove all weeds. Since the Thornapple River is being treated for all weeds both above (upstream) and below us (downstream, Ada) we believe there will be a significant cost decrease after several years of management. All products used will be similar to those currently being used on the river. All are permitted thru the MDEQ. Unlike neighboring parts of the Thornapple River our target is invasive species only. The native areas of weeds will be harvested only if they create a nuisance to those living nearby. In non-navigable areas, of undeveloped riverfront, again only invasive species will be treated. This is the fundamental difference in our board's approach. Every lake/river association we have spoken with treats the maximum area allowed by law. To be conscience to the environment we are looking to be a little more conservative. If natural options for weed management are found, and proven to work, we would use them over herbicides. We recently asked another third party to review our strategy their preliminary discussion says our plan appears economical and environmentally reasonable.

#### **Sediments**

Almost every bayou on our stretch of the river has silted in. The silt and runoff that has been filling the bayous is now filling the river. An area on the river map from 1983 is marked as 28' deep near the dam; in 1994 this area was measured at 24 feet deep. This spring doing water testing we found water depths around 14 feet. As you can see once the bayous filled in the river really received an impact. This material is no longer able to settle in the bayous and is now working its way downstream. All this silt and muck is very bad and causes problems with the fish population, water clarity and overall health of the river. Our plan is to use funds from the assessment to better manage storm water and silt in bayous. Our hope is to construct and maintain sediment capture controls in all bayous. You may have read the township is working to restore and enhance storm water in one of the creeks that flows to the river, unfortunately current township plans stop upstream of the river, leaving a lengthy gap to the bayou, so the benefits to the river are limited. Our program will help close the gaps so the river and all of us can see the most benefit. We are also hopeful that since the assessment would be paying to mobilize companies for that work, (mobilization is typically a large part of the cost associated with a dredging project) that groups of nearby homeowners would adopt or pay to do much needed dredging because the rates or cost would be significantly reduced and more affordable.

#### **Hazardous Objects**

As hazardous objects like the deck that showed up at the point by the golf course appeared a number of years ago we would have the means to have it removed immediately, instead of by groups of volunteers. Actually, another deck came floating down this summer too! Also we could remove trees and other potential hazards as they occur instead of watching them float down to the dam over a few months or years as they bounce off docks.

#### **Train bridge**

Another victim of silt, the bypass around the train bridge for taller pontoon boats has been unusable for at least the past 15 years. Our goal would be to remove sediment from this area as well as the fallen trees and secure/stabilize the shoreline. This would be a similar plan to one the association proposed but failed to follow through on around 2005 to reopen this bypass. The DEQ will not allow us to dredge the bypass larger to accommodate larger craft such as wake boarding boats, as its intent has always been for pontoons, outboards, and shallow craft, that wouldn't clear the railroad structure.

**CTRA ANNUAL MEETING May 10<sup>th</sup> 6:30-8PM Cascade Library Wisner Center**

# **The Cascade Thornapple River Association**

## **Purpose**

To protect and perpetuate the natural resources around the Thornapple River from the Cascade Dam south to the Alaska Bridge (68th Street)

## **Benefit**

Preservation and improvement of property values and the enhancement of the river lifestyle and experience.

## **What the Association Does** – Your Membership Dues at Work

- Water Quality and Safety
    - (a) Annual water testing was organized in the late 90's and has been done on a regular basis since.
    - (b) Removed or organized removal of docks, sunk boats, bridge construction materials, stumps and any foreign objects that serve no purpose being in the waterway or flood plain.
  - 1. Support of the Thornapple Watershed Council with volunteers and donations
  - 2. Monitoring of the airport drainage
  - 3. Sediment control and prevention
  - 4. Invasive species management
  - 5. Weed control and prevention
  - 6. Mark and removal of navigable hazards
- 
- Work to accomplish Association stated purpose and represent members best interests related to commercial and governmental issues
  - Work in conjunction with neighbouring river associations
  - Enhancing the river lifestyle, enjoyment and experience some past examples are:
    1. Annual Fireworks
    2. Ski course
    3. Picnic
    4. Ski show
    5. Boat parade
    6. Pig roast

**E-Mail the Board at:  
cascadethornapple@gmail.com**



As a not-for-profit, volunteer based organization, your support through membership is vital for the Association to continue to provide a clean, safe and enjoyable environment.

---

**Cascade Thornapple River Association**  
**PO Box 888401**  
**Grand Rapids Mi 49588**

## **Mailing Address**

**CTRA ANNUAL MEETING May 10<sup>th</sup> 6:30-8PM Cascade Library Wisner Center**