

GREAT 2007 Annual Report

The efforts of GREAT's board to improve communications and organization have led to increased membership, more event participation, and higher revenues. Memberships rose from only 70 in 2006 to 125 2007 members. Revenues were aided by the addition of Family and Sponsor memberships. Participation by the public at GREAT's monthly paddle outings surged resulting in many non-members joining the organization. The July joint GREAT-Dahlem trip had a record sixty five participants. Several trips had over forty paddlers.

The use of GREAT's new cell phone is being used to place greeting information about upcoming events and trip status such as cancellations. After collecting member e-mail addresses, reminders and notifications of events and membership renewals are being sent. Information about the upcoming event is now posted on GREAT's home web page and slide shows of recent events can be viewed on-line. Increased press releases about upcoming events to the media have resulted in two interviews of GREAT officers on Jackson's local cable channel. These new communication channels have better connected our members and public to the organization in a more timely fashion. GREAT's newsletter with many outstanding environmental, outdoor, and paddling articles is a valuable benefit enjoyed by all GREAT members, regardless of their event participation level. Each of the four issues is now created around a predetermined theme.

A computer member data base has been developed to better track our members and their volunteer interests. Our computer data provides opportunities for more targeted communications to our members such as more timely renewal notices.

A new home for GREAT's seven canoes, eight kayaks, two trailers, paddles and clean-up tools was created by renovating a former cattle barn at the Dahlem Nature Conservatory.

The GREAT Board now uses standing and ad hoc committees to research issues, develop proposals, and implement the tasks. With aid of **Marcoux & Allen** providing pro bono consulting, the GREAT by-laws were revised for the first time since they originated in 1991. Concurrently, the board began drafting written policies for event procedures, finance, communications, membership, and equipment.

GREAT participated as a partner in the first phase of Upper Grand River Implementation Project (UGRIP) by doing a clean-up of a targeted area of the Portage River, the biggest source of pollution to the Upper Grand River. Several GREAT members participated in the first ever local river monitoring and bug identification activities coordinated by UGRIP partner, the Dahlem Nature Conservatory.

The only major disappointment for 2007 was a much lower than projected member and volunteer turn out for GREAT's Annual Grand River Clean-up. This was very dispiriting as much effort was devoted to improve the organization of our trademark environmental event to increase its efficiency. However, a surprising amount of clean-up was accomplished in spite of the manpower shortage. We have identified and analyzed the likely causes for the low worker numbers and will use new strategies to increase 2008 participation.

While much has been accomplished, there are still some key tasks to be completed. The board has identified the following goals for 2008: 1.) Develop a Plan for GREAT's two land parcels; 2.) Develop budget and inventory formats to be analyzed for sustainability; 3.) Create a GREAT policy manual; 4) Improve the navigability of the Grand River in Jackson County

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Seitz
GREAT President
3/19/2008