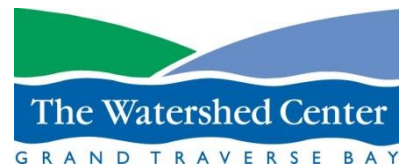


**The Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
Antrim County Annual Report
FY 2017-2018**



13272 S. West Bay Shore Drive
Traverse City, MI 49684
www.gtbay.org
231.935.1514

Adopt-A-Stream

- The Watershed Center continued our volunteer stream monitoring program that includes sampling several locations along the Rapid River, which are in fair to good condition (www.gtbay.org/2017-adopt-a-stream-annual-report).
- We also trained volunteers of Grass River Natural Area, who have several monitoring sites along Grass River and its tributaries.

Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed Plan Implementation Team (ERCOL-WPIT)

- The Watershed Center has co-facilitated these bi-monthly meetings with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council since November 2010.
- Collectively, this collaboration of lake associations, non-profit organizations, local and state government, and interested citizens was formed to implement projects pertaining to the Elk River Chain of Lakes (ERCOL) in the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Protection Plan (www.gtbay.org/resources/watershed-protection-plan).
- This last year, group initiatives included:
 - Arctic grayling: a subcommittee formed to gather information on potential rivers in the ERCOL where grayling could potentially be stocked in the future; this information was provided to the Michigan Arctic Grayling Initiative for consideration (www.migrayling.org).
 - Golden Brown Algae: several lake associations continue to work with Michigan State University and others to study the cause of golden brown algae blooms in the ERCOL (<http://3lakes.com/golden-brown-benthic-algae-project>).
 - Large woody debris: several large woody debris structures were placed in Grass River to help control sediment. This was a successful pilot project that ERCOL-WPIT hopes to replicate in other streams in the ERCOL.
 - Rugg Pond: there is an initiative seeking funding for a sediment study on Rugg Pond to better understand the depth of sediment build-up behind the dam and if there are any contaminant issues.
 - Swimmer's itch: several lakes are participating in a study concerning swimmer's itch and how best to work to lessen/eliminate the impacts (www.misip.org).
 - Torch Lake data: TWC partnered with Torch Conservation Center, Torch Lake Protection Alliance, Three Lakes Association, and Antrim Conservation District to secure a \$15,000 Dole Family Foundation grant. This grant allowed for a National Lake Assessment on Torch Lake, compiling and digitizing monitoring data for Torch Lake, creating a field station at the Antrim Conservation District with equipment to borrow for monitoring purposes, and a public presentation about utilizing the monitoring data. TWC was the fiduciary of these grant funds.
 - Torch Lake sandbar taskforce: interest in lessening the impact of boats anchoring on the south shore of Torch Lake has led to increased law enforcement, renting trash receptacles and porta potties, water quality testing, and other initiatives.

- TCE plume: tracking progress on new equipment installation and movement of the plume in the county.
- Water trail: Paddle Antrim has secured several grants and other funding sources to complete the ERCOL Water Trail, including information signage and wayfinding signs, improved access locations, universally accessible kayak launches, and much more (www.paddleantrim.com/water-trail). ERCOL-WPIT is supporting their efforts through outreach, presentations, content for signs, letters of support, etc.
- The ERCOL-WPIT Septic Subcommittee continued our work focusing on septic issues in the ERCOL.
 - We studied topics including technical considerations of septic systems, land application of septage and biosolids, examples of statewide septic codes, etc.
 - We did a survey of Milton Township residents with no septic information on file with the Health Department of Northwest Michigan, asking for any information they had on their systems (mailed 1,101 letters; 9% response rate).
 - We wrote several letters to DEQ and others concerning Michigan's draft septic code.

Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed Protection Plan

- The Watershed Center continues to work with Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council to complete the Elk River Chain of Lakes Watershed Protection Plan.
- We are working with the ERCOL-WPIT to finalize priority areas, tasks, monitoring plans, and the information and education strategy.

Elk Rapids Community Visioning

- The Watershed Center has been working with staff from the Village of Elk Rapids to provide a community visioning session focused on green infrastructure in fall 2018.
- Drummond Carpenter will be leading the session, which is a planning tool that enables residents, business owners, and other stakeholders to have a voice in the decision-making process about green infrastructure in the village.

Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Protection Plan Update

- The Watershed Center began updating the Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Protection Plan, which will focus mostly on coastal areas and smaller tributaries.
- The largest subwatersheds – Boardman River and Elk River Chain of Lakes – will soon have their own protection plans that will be incorporated into the Grand Traverse Bay plan.
- We have been meeting with stakeholders and collecting data to inform the updated plan, which includes a leadership team that will meet quarterly.
- Public input sessions are scheduled this summer (June 27 in Suttons Bay, July 12 in Traverse City, July 19 in Elk Rapids), and a survey will be posted on www.gtbay.org.

Outreach

- The Watershed Center gave numerous educational presentations to local groups (garden clubs, lake associations, realtor groups, etc.) and jurisdictions (planning

commissions, trustees, etc.), as well as participated in several community events/festivals.

- We responded to water quality concerns from numerous citizens, business owners, and other organizations.
- We continued to monitor jurisdictions and permit applications for projects with the potential to impact water quality.
- We worked with several township, village, and county staff and elected officials to adopt or enhance ordinances, master plans, and other guiding documents that protect water quality (stormwater ordinances, setback/buffer ordinances, tree protection ordinances, parks and recreation master plans, etc.)

Urban and Community Forestry Grant

- The Watershed Center, ReLeaf Michigan, and Davey Resource Group completed our US Forest Service grant to collaborate with communities to implement green infrastructure practices designed to reduce stormwater runoff (<https://gtbaycanopy.weebly.com>).
- We worked with 5 communities (Bellaire, Elk Rapids, Kalkaska, Kingsley, and Northport) to provide a tree canopy assessment, hands-on training to support that assessment, a community outreach workshop to discuss the findings and engage the community, and plant 50 trees in priority areas.
- Elk Rapids' assessment and tree plantings were complete in spring 2017, while Bellaire finished in fall 2017.
- Although this grant may be complete, we will continue to engage with these communities to assist with efforts to protect and plant trees as a way to manage stormwater.