

Pine River/Van Etten Lake Monitoring Grant
Tracking Code: #3003-VSM2008-03
Final Report

The overriding **goals** of developing this volunteer stream monitoring program were to begin collecting baseline data on the Pine River, a watershed in the 11 county service area of Huron Pines, and to use the success of that project to build momentum for volunteer stream monitoring throughout the watersheds we serve.

The **objectives** to accomplish these goals were broken into three major categories: 1) administering the grant, 2) educating and training volunteers, and 3) implementing the sampling procedure. A complete list of each objective and subtasks can be seen in attachment A.

Throughout the project, all of the objectives were completed. The goal of using this project to garner interest throughout our service area was not realized to the extent originally hoped. However, a second volunteer-based stream monitoring program did come from the success in the PRVEL watershed, and that is an Upper Manistee Program.

The major barrier to being successful at developing projects in each of our watershed is the overcoming the fear of how much work volunteers will need to do. An important element of success for this program is that most programs truly are started and maintained on a grassroots level. It is one, or a few, motivated volunteers that will spearhead and lead the project. When it is an organization like Huron Pines trying to drum up interest in watersheds that do not have that key, highly-engaged volunteer, it is difficult for watershed groups to take on what seems like a lot of responsibility.

In the PRVEL watershed, there was an interested group of people that brought the idea to Huron Pines. Gene Stagner, has led that effort since its inception and continually gets approximately a dozen dedicated returning volunteers. On the Pine River and Van Etten Creek, a total of 5 sites have been sampled since fall of 2008.

Fortunately, on the Manistee, a volunteer of that dedication was quickly identified and he has been able to maintain enough interest in a core group of volunteers to continue sampling 4 sites, twice a year. As many as 25 volunteers have participated in an event on the Manistee River, though there are 10-12 that are present at every event. Any time new volunteers decide to participate, they were sent with people that had sampled many times over so they could be trained by an "expert". If there enough new volunteers, specific trainings sessions would be held the day prior to the event.

It is early in the sampling history to begin to speculate on environmental benefits of the sampling, other than the fact that this project is a way to engage more and more people in the watersheds that interest them. We have had numerous occasions during which volunteers have expressed that it is enjoyable to have another method to enjoy their favorite rivers. As part of the evaluation and outreach of these two projects, we have

tried to encourage our volunteers to participate in projects on other rivers and to participate in each other's projects. For example, we have had volunteers from PRVEL help with Manistee events. There is also an Au Sable monitoring project that has had volunteers participate in multiple programs.

Another success story of the volunteer monitoring project is that Huron Pines has begun to incorporate macroinvertebrate monitoring on many of our restoration projects. For example, several of our road/stream crossing improvement projects that aim to improve passage of aquatic organisms and reduce non-point source sediment are incorporating this type of monitoring.

Partners for the volunteer monitoring efforts on both the PRVEL and Manistee watersheds include:

- The Pine River/Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition, who has been the main source of volunteers, an avenue for project updates and information sharing, and a source of funding for smaller materials purchases.
- The Paul H Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited has provided numerous volunteers as part of their "work weekend" trips to northern Michigan. The Chapter has also funded many of the volunteer efforts led by Huron Pines, including the volunteer stream monitoring of both the Manistee and PRVEL watersheds.
- The Iosco County Community Foundation provided \$1000 in local match to the PRVEL stream monitoring project
- Huron Pines has continued to provide project management and help with sampling, identification and public outreach.
- The Great Lakes Commission provided \$7420 to the project for the PRVEL monitoring and development of the Manistee effort.

As of summer 2010 there have been 4 sampling events at each of the 5 locations in the PRVEL watershed. The Manistee River project has had 3 events at their 4 sampling sites.

With the support of the dedicated volunteers and a bit of financial backing from the Pine River/Van Etten Lake Watershed Coalition, the PRVEL monitoring project is well established enough to continue in perpetuity. So too is the Manistee portion of the project as they are backed so far by the Paul Young Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and have begun to gain the involvement of the Upper Manistee Property Owners Association. Another positive indication of each project's potential success is the increasing cross volunteerism that is occurring. The more people have participated in these events, the more interested they become in involving themselves in additional programs.

Attachment A: Objectives and Subtasks

1.0 Administrative:

- 1.1 Develop and submit QAPP within 60 days. Project Manager/Huron Pines 20%
- 1.2 Attend 1-day MiCorps training session. Project Manager and other key players. 3%
- 1.3 Joint sampling evaluation session with MiCorps staff. Project Manager/Key players/Huron Pines, 5%
- 1.4 Participate in annual MiCorps Conference. Project and assistant project manager/Huron Pines. 8%
- 1.5 Develop and submit quarterly status and financial reports. Project manager/Huron Pines. 5%
- 1.6 Develop and submit final report. Project manager/Huron Pines.5%
- 1.7 Submit Release of Claims Statement. Project manager/Huron Pines.1%
- 1.8 Develop and maintain volunteer database. Project Manager. 5%
- 1.9 Develop and maintain database for monitoring data. Project Manager.5%
- 1.10 Submit provision of products and deliverables Project Manager. 5%
- 1.11 Submit data to MiCorps Data Exchange Network. Project Manager.5%

2.0 Education and Training

- 2.1 Develop training program and materials for volunteers. Project Manager/Huron Pines.5%
- 2.2 Develop sampling session evaluation form. Project Manager. 2%
- 2.3 Hold training session for all new volunteers prior to each sampling session. Project Manager. 2%

3.0 Sampling Sessions

- 3.1 Confirm volunteers prior to each sampling session and make assignments. Project Manager. 1%
- 3.2 Perform sampling events. Project Manager and all volunteers. 10%
- 3.3 Conduct sample identification session within two weeks of sampling event. Project Manager and some volunteers. 10%
- 3.4 Inform all volunteers of sampling results. Project Manager. 1%
- 3.5 Review sampling evaluation forms. Project Manager. 1%
- 3.6 Issue press releases, will aid in recruiting volunteers. Project Manager. 1%

Attachment B: Photos

