

Final Report

Upper AuSable River Watershed Monitoring Project

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The primary goal of this project is to aid in the protection of the Upper AuSable River watershed by collecting quality assured, long-term data on the water quality of the river and its tributaries, and disseminating this information in useful formats to local decision makers and citizen groups with an interest in the health of the river.

Our secondary goal was to assemble a diverse team of individuals and organizations who shared a love of the river and who would staff the project and sustain it for the long term. Both of these goals have been substantially met. We have indeed collected quality assured data during two river events each year for a period of three years. The data is available locally at www.ausableriverwatershed.org and has been entered into the MiCorps database. We maintain a database of 96 individuals who wish always to be kept informed about the project. They will all soon learn that our project's final report has been successfully submitted to MiCorps. Many of these individuals are connected with organizations such as Anglers of the AuSable and Trout Unlimited and their vast memberships also wish to be kept informed about the quality of the AuSable River watershed. Within in the database are 35 or more individuals who are active at river day events. Within that group are 10 or more individuals who are active at macroinvertebrate identification events. Among them are three professionally trained entomologists. The rest of us have been coached and are now fully competent to identify an entire collection unassisted. We continue to learn from each other and truly enjoy the

science. MiCorps training events have been very important in assuring that our group is doing correct identifications. Our data has been entered into the MiCorps database both into macroinvertebrate groups and into macroinvertebrate families.

We began with six sampling sites spread across the entire watershed and with the intention of adding six more sites. In fact, sampling more sites was never practical nor especially useful. Since our active group of collectors seems to have topped out at about 35, and to successfully survey a site requires a minimum of 4 or 5, we simply felt under staffed to add more sites. Further, other groups are sampling other sections of the watershed. The Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited is sampling the upper reaches of the AuSable main branch and a "Trophy Waters" group is sampling the stretch below the Mio dam. We continue to search for a site above Roscommon on the south branch, however, the river up there is hard to get to and can be quite treacherous. Finally, our data sets are consistently good to excellent. If a problem site were to be brought to our attention, we would turn a good deal of our efforts in that direction and new sites would be selected and monitored. Right now additional sites are just not needed.

Our project has had a public relations goal of communicating about the watershed to a very wide population. To some extent, we have been quite successful. We have working partnerships and/or friendships with some very important and influential organizations that are associated with the AuSable River, such as:

1. Anglers of the AuSable, a 600-member strong 501(c)(3) environmental conservation organization founded in Grayling in 1987 to protect and enhance the AuSable River for future generations of fly fishers.
2. Kirtland Community College serves the four-county district of Roscommon, Crawford, Ogemaw, and Oscoda, which includes 99% of the watershed. The college's science department has made a commitment to provide in-kind contributions of collecting equipment, lab space and expertise.
3. The AuSable River Center in Roscommon maintains a natural history museum dedicated to preserving and promoting the AuSable River. Our project maintains a beautiful hands-on display at the Center. Collections and records for the project are stored at the Center.
4. The AuSable River Watershed Restoration Committee is an umbrella organization for 30 partner organizations that are dedicated to the

restoration and preservation of the watershed.

5. Huron Pines is a 501(C)(3) conservation organization that serves the 11-county region of northeast Michigan and works to achieve its mission through projects such as river restoration, watershed management, conservation leadership and land stewardship.

6. Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of Trout Unlimited is based in Grayling and maintains a very active role in our project.

7. Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited is based in Gaylord and maintains a very active role in our project.

8. William B. Mershon Chapter of Trout Unlimited is based in Bay City and has conducted a similar project in the past and provides us with a long-term in-kind contribution of collecting equipment and otherwise maintains a very active role in our project.

9. Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve (MGNP) is the lead agency for this project and administers the grant and all other funds related to the project. MGNP's board of directors are committed to the project and provides resources as needed. MGNP's education director serves as the project leader.

We have also received support from the Kirtland Community College Foundation and the Roscommon County Community Foundation. We are indeed fortunate to have such friends. Past support and we have no doubt that future support will come from all of the previously mentioned organizations.

Our out-reach efforts have also been quite successful. Presentations about the project have been made to many civic organizations and community groups. Further, we are present at public gatherings such as the Kirtland's Warbler Wildlife Festival and the AuSable River Festival. The project has been presented to large groups of children at Marguerite Gahagan Nature Preserve and at two public libraries. We are covered well by local newspapers, including a two-page color pictorial following one of our river day events. We have developed a beautiful multicolor watershed map and have distributed them to our partners and friends. A multicolor trifold brochure has just been completed and will be distributed to appropriate venues. A copy of the brochure is attached to this report. One of our volunteers has become a very proficient microscopic photographer of the macroinvertebrates that turn up in our collections. Some of his photographs will be attached to this report. We have a small collection of photographs that were taken at river day events. Some of those

photographs will be attached to this report.

The grant proposal that was submitted to MiCorps December 5, 2007 included a comprehensive work plan and timeline. Clearly, our work plan was ambitious and we are very grateful that we were given an additional year to complete our work. As we conclude the MiCorps portion of our watershed monitoring project and survey our work over the past three years, we see that every item in our work plan has been completed.

- We completed and adhere to our Quality Assurance Project Plan.
- We developed Web Page to share our project with the public.
- We maintained a budget and reported quarterly to MiCorps.
- We developed a permanent display at the AuSable River Center.
- We have a portable display for use at public gatherings.
- We developed a tri-fold brochure to educate & promote the project.
- We had a joint (side-by-side) sampling event with MiCorps staff.
- We identified and staked our six monitoring sites in the watershed.
- We recruited a cadre of volunteers and continue to grow our group.
- We held training sessions to get everyone using the same protocol.
- We acquired the equipment and materials needed for the project.
- We scheduled and held river day events twice each year for 3 years.
- We collected macroinvertebrate samples and assessed adjacent habitats at each river day event.
- We identified, labeled, and scored each sample according to the accepted MiCorps protocol. Each of samples have consistently scored good to excellent on the protocol scale.
- Our sample collections and tabulated data are safely stored and available for evaluation by interested parties.
- Members of our group have attended the MiCorps conference each year of the project. Last year we gave a presentation to the audience.
- We are scheduled for our next, post MiCorps project, river day event on the first Saturday following Labor Day, 2011.
- We receive continuous feedback from our partner organizations, as each organization has members who are active in our annual events.
- We are very grateful for the resource that is MiCorps and we will endeavor to continue to participate in the program in the future.

