

Healthy Pine River
Membership Meeting Minutes
April 10th, 2025
7:00pm

Call to Order: Brittany

Approval of Minutes: Gary/Murray

Financial Report:

Opening Balance as of 03/01/25: \$28, 987.97

Deposits and Credits: \$1,120.00

Withdrawals and Debits: \$3,344.79

Closing Balance as of 03/31/25: \$26,763.18

Meeting Adjourned: Maria/Lynn

HPR Updates: Twenty-five contributors, businesses and individuals alike donated to the Friends Campaign which matched ten thousand dollars for the United Ways matching grant. This will go towards supplies, water testing, and other important efforts. The 2025 Membership Drive concludes at the end of April, and currently, HPR has three pending EGLE grants. Jack Veverka, an Alma College student, had created five posters highlighting key initiatives for Healthy Pine River which include “20 years of Annual Water Testing”, a “Bathymetry study”, “HPR Outreach Efforts”, “Downstream Impacts of the Pine River”, and “Community Septic Service.”

Program Guests: Dr. Murray Borrello, Alma College Instructor of Geology and Environmental Studies. Dr. Benjamin Peterson, Alma College Co-Director of the Center for College and Community Engagement; Lecturer of History and Political Science.

“Pine River Problem: Where Do We Go From Here?” (Dr. Murray Borrello):

Dr. Borrello presented a brief overview of the Pine River’s condition, highlighting its impact on nearby communities and counties. He noted that the upper Saginaw River basin that includes the Chippewa and Pine Rivers is impaired due to agricultural runoff and chemical pollution. Research confirmed that algal blooms are moving downstream. Three studies were conducted and addressed key questions:

1. Are CAFOs contributing to algal blooms?
2. Are there human health risks from agricultural runoff?

Findings showed that CAFOs are major sources of manure, leading to elevated nitrogen, phosphorus, and E. coli levels, after manure application. E. coli was found to be antibiotic-resistant in the Pine River, and low dissolved oxygen levels are harming the river’s ecosystem.

“Save the Pine, Save Our Community” (Dr. Ben Peterson):

Dr. Peterson outlined strategies for restoring the Pine River and the need for collaboration with local, state, and federal representatives. He stated that addressing pollution must go hand-in-hand with supporting Central Michigan’s agricultural community. Proposed solutions included funding and fast-tracking anaerobic digesters, expanding buffer zones through CREP, and improving waste treatment regulations and remediation funding. Challenges include reliance on state funding, the complexity of digesters, and the need for fair, cooperative regulation. Outside the presentation, farm forums at Alma College revealed that most CAFOs are family-owned in the area. While many owners were unaware of the environmental impacts of manure application, they expressed a willingness to help address pollution. Additionally, thirteen attempts to contact Congressman Moolenaar went unanswered.

Next Meeting
May 8, 2025
Alma Public Library