



HPR Spring Newsletter

March 2025 – May 2025

**EGLE 2025 Dam Risk Reduction grant** – Great News! The City of Alma, HPR, and GEI Consultants were awarded the EGLE 2025 Dam Risk Reduction grant that provides for a “Feasibility Study” on the Mill Pond and State Street Dam. This study will help us better understand the reasons for the degradation of the Mill Pond over the past two decades and what role the State Street Dam plays in that ongoing degradation. The two-year grant of nearly \$300,000 is designed to help us understand what the viable solutions are to restoring the Mill Pond and river channel. The purpose of this study is to guide the community on how to restore the health of the river, water recreation, assist property development, and provide the city guidance on the costs of dam upkeep or possible dam removal for the “non-functioning” State defined “significant hazard” classified dam. The grant work is anticipated to start in the fall of 2025.



*State Street Dam in Alma, MI*

**Summer Water Testing** – HPR continues to provide funding (\$8,900) to Alma College for annual water testing that is conducted by Dr. Borrello and his students during the summer. Testing this summer will be throughout the four-county watershed along with special attention to specific sites above/below our communities and some identified tributaries. This effort is to understand the river’s health and struggles. Our HPR website has the [20 year summary](#) of water testing of the Pine River available for your review.

View more watershed testing and studies at <https://www.healthypineriver.org/information-and-education/>.

**A Special Video by Dave Shepherd** – Please stop by the HPR website to have a chance to play Dave Shepherd’s video on the Pine River. [Click Here to View the Video](#). Dave has used his drone and camera to capture wonderful pictures and footage of the river and wildlife that inhabits our Upper Pine River Watershed. The video, music, and narrative are a wonderful reminder of why HPR exists....to help preserve this wonderful resource.



*Image from Dave’s Tour of the Pine River video.*

**Arcada Township Oil Spill** – On December 27, 2024, a local property owner reported to the Gratiot Drain Commissioner and Gratiot Emergency Management Director an unusual looking substance in his drainage ditch in Arcada Township. The investigation resulted in locating a puncture in a Wolverine Pipeline that carries petroleum through Gratiot County to destinations in Southern Michigan and Chicago. Wolverine Pipeline immediately deployed people and equipment to begin recovery efforts to remove the oil from the drain it was discovered in.

HPR hosted three monthly meetings ([January](#), [March](#), [May](#)) dealing with this emergency circumstance and the threat to our environment. According to Wolverine representatives and an EGLE oversight individual, the oil spill was contained, and oil captured from the spill equated to roughly 5 – 55 gallon drums. In May’s HPR meeting, Drain Commissioner Bernie Barnes shared that they do not know who punctured the oil pipeline or when it was punctured.

Wolverine Pipeline calculations of amount of petroleum that spilled into the drain are based on the date the incident was reported; while Alma College calculations are significantly higher due to the possibility the line had been leaking from the punctured pipeline prior to the leak’s discovery in late December 2024.

**HPR is seeking Sustainability** – Celebrating HPR’s 10<sup>th</sup> year in 2025 has brought some challenging realities to our HPR organization. Possibly the most significant reality is that volunteer organizations must turn to some form of funding to move forward in their efforts and to realize their mission.

The past 2-3 years HPR has made significant progress by hiring field liaisons, consultants, and researchers. These employees and contractors help us accomplish tasks that bring us closer to our goal of restoring the Pine River and its tributaries to a healthy state. We have also learned that there are many moving parts in trying to restore a river.

HPR has asked their members in the 2025 HPR Membership Drive, and local businesses and organizations in our “Friends of the Pine River” fundraising campaign, to consider giving a little bit more to help fund our on-going work that includes: annual water testing; septic assistance to our rural communities/residents; research to gain knowledge of conditions we least understand; and to seek out consultants to guide us in our major projects. United Way of Greater Central Michigan supported Healthy Pine River’s “Friends of the Pine River” fundraising with a [matching grant](#). United way matched the first \$10,000 raised for a total of \$20,912.89 donated to HPR during the fundraising campaign.



*HPR Board Members receiving the “Friends of the Pine River” matching grant from United Way of Greater Central Michigan.*

*“Friends of the Pine River” is HPR’s fundraising campaign for local businesses and organizations.*

Extra giving from both our HPR members and our local businesses and organizations helps us continue our efforts in restoring our river and watershed. Thank you!

Please check-out the list of “Friends of the Pine River” on our [website](#), along with knowing that many of our members significantly increased their giving in 2025 to HPR.

**Education Outreach** – Our Alma Public Schools team participating in the [United Way Pitch-er This! Competition](#) won a \$5,000 scholarship to develop a HPR presentation regarding our river and watershed for Alma Public Schools Middle and High School Science classes. We have met with the APS Curriculum Council and have been given the go-ahead to develop the presentations and will be working over the summer to have the presentations ready for the fall when school starts.

To further our outreach efforts to our youth we are working with the Forest Hill Nature Area to develop river and watershed information that will fit the 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> grade outcomes for classes visiting Forest Hill Nature Area. We hope our work this summer on the river and watershed will be ready to be utilized by the nature center this coming fall.

**Septic Assistance Continues this spring/summer** – HPR’s septic liaison has shared with our members that she has now worked with over 300 residences in our rural communities of Sumner, Elm Hall, and Riverdale. Mikie’s focus next is Elwell along with those rural residents that live on an extended drain or tributary that flows into the Pine River. Mikie works closely with Mid-Michigan District Health Department and local sewer contractors in assisting our rural residents in knowing if they have a functioning septic system that is not causing contamination in our waterways.

**LEAPS & Earth Day** – This spring HPR’s annual Earth Day metal recycling campaign got a real boost from the Alma College Leaders for Environmental Awareness, Protection, and Sustainability (LEAPS). HPR and LEAPS collaborated along with the Community Garden and Forest Hill Nature Area to provide 50 student volunteers plus our usual 5-6 HPR folks to help with these three very worthwhile projects.

HPR volunteered to provide lunch (grilling sliders and hot dogs) chips, cookies, and lemonade for our volunteers as they assisted us with metal collection, worked in the community garden, and headed out to Forest Hill Nature Area to do spring cleanup tasks in readying for visiting classes.



*Metal Drive Donations*



*LEAPS volunteering at the Gratiot Community Garden*



*LEAPS volunteers at Forest Hill Nature Area*

Photos are courtesy of the [Alma College Leaps Instagram Page](#).