



2025 Summer Newsletter

For HPR Members & Friends



Summer Happenings funded by HPR: Attend our September 11th meeting to get caught up on what's happening to our river and watershed.

- **Summer Water Testing**

It's been a busy summer for Alma College Professor Murray Borello and his six Alma College interns! Water testing for the Pine River, its tributaries, and attached drains in our Upper Pine River Watershed has been completed, and **those test results will be shared in our October 9th membership meeting at the Alma Public Library.**

In addition to the normal testing routine, the team sought to locate the contamination sources that are negatively impacting the St. Louis impoundment. They currently are developing a paper for publication this fall on the testing techniques for locating contamination sources. We hope the research paper will be used as a guide for other communities who wish to make a difference in their water quality.

The team also is studying the economic impacts of Pine River. This includes the economic impact on our community residents, property owners, and commercial/residential development.

- **Septic Work**

Mikie Vanhorn, our HPR septic liaison, has had a busy summer working collaboratively with the Alma College water testing group and Gratiot County Drain Commissioner Bernie Barnes. This collaborative effort is to develop a more comprehensive plan in determining the locations of contamination sites in our county. Mikie is now working with Elwell residents and has now serviced over 300 homes in making sure faulty residential septic systems are not a source of contamination in the Pine River.

- **Educational Outreach**

New board member Sara Miller is taking the lead role in working with Forest Hills Nature Area and Alma Public Schools in providing educational learning for our river and watershed. Sara led our HS/MS students in the Pitch-er This! United Way Youth competition for Isabella and Gratiot Counties. The Alma Public Schools team was awarded a \$5,000 scholarship to continue to develop presentations and materials to inform and educate our younger generations about the issues the river and watershed are facing.

- **EGLE Dam Risk Reduction grant**

This two-year grant is designed to help us better **understand the ongoing degradation of the Mill Pond/Impoundment** behind the State Street Dam in Alma, and to provide us direction and options on restoring the Mill Pond or river channel.

This “Feasibility Study” will be crucial for the City of Alma and its residents to best understand how we can move forward in restoring water recreation, protecting property values, and encouraging the commercial and residential development along the river bank brownfield area.



Farm Engagement

HPR is working collaboratively with members of our farming community and county farm agencies in an effort to reduce contamination from livestock manure and commercial fertilizers. We have met with a number of local farmers and farm agencies and hope to have an advisory group ready to share with our membership by November. Farming is such a significant economic reality for Gratiot County, and working cooperative and collaboratively in advocating for our farmers success and environmental health improvements is a significant goal of HPR.

September 11th HPR Membership Meeting

Join us at Pine River Park for a **Welcome Back Cookout!**

The Cookout will begin at 6:00 p.m. (Park Pavilion) with our HPR membership meeting following at **7:00 p.m.**

Topics for this meeting include:

The Dam Risk Reduction Grant has been awarded to the City of Alma, HPR, & GEI Consultants to develop a Feasibility Study. This study will show us our options for restoring the Mill Pond/Impoundment behind the State Street Dam. Representatives from each organization will be here to discuss this two year project.



Membership Meeting & Cookout

Location:

Pine River Park (Next to Conservation Park)
[630 S Lincoln Rd, Alma, MI 48801]

Date:

Thursday September 11th, 2025

Time:

Cookout Starts @ 6:00 PM

Meeting Starts @ 7:00 PM

Please bring a lawn chair. If the weather looks poor, we will make an announcement to move to an indoor venue.

All Healthy Pine River Membership Meetings are Open to the Public

Summer Water Testing*, **Septic work**, and **ongoing research** has been the focus of our summer work will be shared with members. HPR funded \$8,900 to fund these projects. *Water testing results will be shared in detail during the *October 9th* membership meeting.

HPR Priorities/Projects

have been identified by the HPR board at an August 14th meeting, and will be shared with our members to gain feedback as to the levels of importance.

Transitions at HPR:

New Leadership and New Board Members is a good thing!!

Chuck and Lynn Sandro have tendered their resignations as HPR Chair and Treasurer after many years of serving in those capacities. Both will stay active in HPR but relinquish their leadership roles. Maria Kolb, Ameri-Corp Vista Volunteer who has been serving as our board secretary, will be departing Alma this fall in pursuit of her Masters Degree.

Over the past month HPR board members have discussed the transitions in leadership and have asked Dr. Ben Peterson to replace Chuck as the chairperson for HPR. Ben brings a great background to the position as an Alma College professor and former lobbyist. These past two years, Ben's Public Policy class and Creating Change class have served HPR in conducting surveys and seeking advocacy for HPR priorities.

HPR has also added new HPR board members including:

- **Dave Ringle**, Director of City Services for Alma
- **Josh Leppien**, DDA Director and Assistant City Manager for the City of St. Louis
- **Sara Miller**, Retired Alma Middle School Teacher working with Education Outreach
- **Annie Singh**, LEAPS representative for Alma College

It is also important for us to say a **"Big Thank You"** to our two Vista Volunteers **Zoe Palmer** and **Maria Kolb** who have provided great service to HPR in a number of projects. Zoe is heading to MSU as a Resident Hall Director, while Maria heads to Europe to begin her Masters Program.

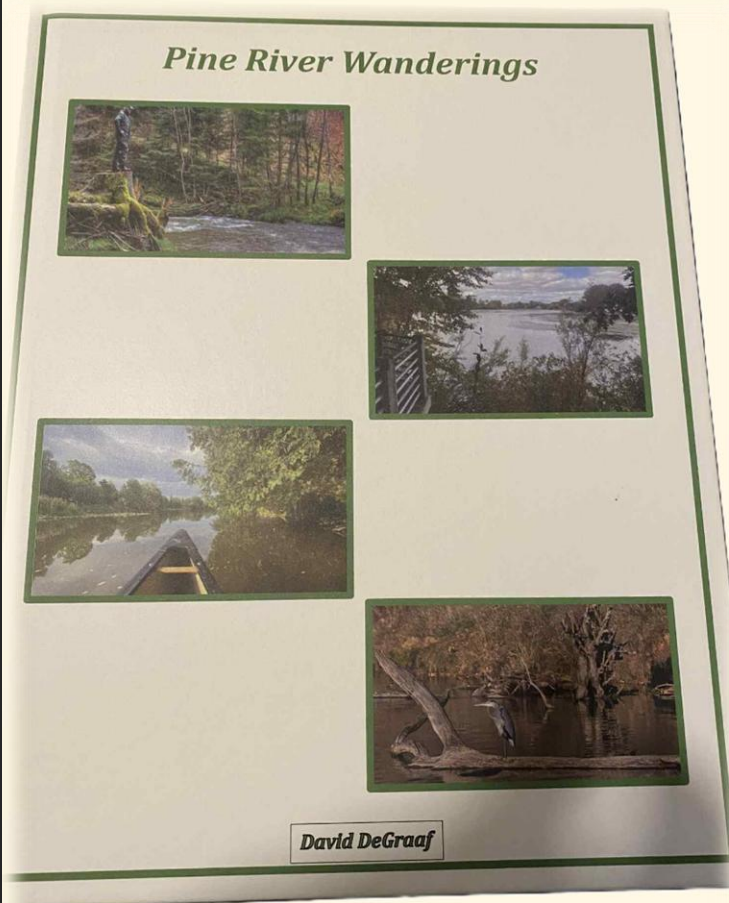
Book for Sale: Pine River Wanderings

Author and true friend to nature Dave DeGraaf has published a hardbound version of his book *Pine River Wanderings*.

The book is a compilation of 27 weeks of "wandering" along the Pine River from April to November 2020 detailing the natural history of the Pine River from its mouth to its source.

The book is a beautiful combination of poetry, pictures, and Dave's daily logs of his travels.

Dave generously arranged for the **purchase of his book (cost \$25) to be a donation to Healthy Pine River** to continue HPR's mission of restoring the river to a healthy state.



HPR will have copies of Dave's book *Pine River Wanderings* for sale (\$25) at the September 11th membership meeting.

- Meeting Location @ Pine River Park
- Cookout Starts @ 6:00 p.m.
- Meeting begins @ 7:00 p.m.