Healthy Pine River
Membership Meeting Minutes
October 8, 2026
7:00 PM @ Alma Public Library

Call to Order: Dr. Ben Peterson
Approval of Minutes: Gary R. / Josh L.
Financial Report:
Beginning Balance as of 09/01/26: $25,982.04
Deposits & Credits: $2,500.00
Withdrawals & Debits: $1,332.18
Ending Balance as of 09/30/26: $27,149.86
Meeting Adjourned: Josh L. / Brittany S.

Property Value Grant: Luke, Ben, and a professor from Alma College, Vinitha Varghese, just submitted a $37,000 watershed council grant in hopes of investigating and quantifying how the issues with the Pine River are impacting property values. This is a continuation of the work that was done by Alma College student Gage Mitchell, including conducting interviews with real estate agents, property managers, and residents in Alma.

Updated Role - Steward: Dave Shepherd, the Vice Chair of HPR, has a new title, "Steward". He shared that with his new role he's focusing on potential projects that HPR members might be interested in that will help the Pine River.

Pine River Witness Update: Ben shared that people have sent in submissions for the Pine River Witness program for HPR's social media. Those submissions will start being posted in October. People are still welcome to submit their thoughts and a picture that revolves around the river.

Summer Water Testing - Update on the Pine River Watershed: Murray Borrello and Alma College students presented on their results from summer water testing. Through a partnership between the Great Lake Watershed Institute (GLWI) and Montcalm Community College (MCC), two MCC students also were able to conduct research. Overall, results from testing show that concentrations of ammonia, phosphorus, and E. coli are getting higher and that the entirety of the watershed is impacted by industrial agriculture and septic inputs in some places.

Students presented on varying topics that they specifically focused on. One student created a map using GIS (Geographic Information System) to create a map that has varying information, including the watersheds in Michigan, all of the locations that have been tested for agriculture inputs, locations of CAFOs, and locations of manure-accepting fields. The next student presented results of testing in the upstream (headwaters) part of the watershed in hopes of finding an unimpacted site. The third student presented their results from a macroinvertebrate study to see ecological impacts from agricultural inputs. The fourth student presented on what can be expected in the future for Pine River from climate change effects. Finally, in place of another student, Murray presented the human health risks of the high concentrations of E. coli that are in the Pine River watershed.

Next Meeting: November 12, 2026 | 7:00 PM | Alma Public Library