



Upper Black River Council - Final Report for 2020 River Work Season January 11, 2021

In spite of the challenges faced by all of us during 2020, a full season of restoration work was again completed by the Upper Black River Council (UBRC), and its many partners. As may be recalled from our 2019 report, the current project permit reach begins at Sparr Road in eastern Otsego County and wraps up farther north at the Tyrolean Hills area about 3.5 miles downstream (see maps included - Permit No. WRP017532)

As has been the case since 2017, the bulk of the in-stream habitat work was completed by Ken Reed Contracting, Inc.. In addition to this permit work on the main branch of the Upper Black River, Ken and his crew completed a variety of maintenance items on Canada Creek, a major tributary of the system. As in the past, this work was completed for our project partner, Canada Creek Ranch (CCR).

We also saw the completion of the long-awaited Shingle Mill Bridge replacement project on CR-622 at its crossing of the East Branch of the Black River. Thanks to the efforts of Josh Liesen of Huron-Pines, and their project partners, principally the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this came to fruition.

In addition to the main branch in-stream work which will be detailed below, several volunteer partnership projects were also completed. These included the High Banks access stairway repair on the East Branch of the Black, and

a fish passage maintenance project on Canada Creek. The access stair project was organized and largely conducted with the Montmorency County Conservation Club. Similarly, the beaver dam removal/fish passage effort was spearheaded by the Headwaters Chapter of Michigan Trout Unlimited.

In addition to these organizational projects, the UBRC is blessed to have many individual volunteer stewards who, under the leadership of MDNR Fisheries Biologist Tim Cwalinski, complete a variety of tasks that agency staff time and resources would not otherwise allow - this was especially true during a time which was so severely impacted by the global pandemic.

This year's contract permit work resulted in the **completion of 229 new in-stream structures** over a nearly 0.75 mile reach of river. When considering the remote location and access characteristics,



the 2020 season places it among the most productive years in the UBRC's nearly 30-year history.

We are most grateful to those who, time and again, invest in preserving and enhancing the only river in the lower peninsula specifically managed for its naturally reproducing brook trout fishery. We extend our thanks to this most generous list of project partners: the Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program of the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Huron Pines, Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited, Michigan Fly Fishing Club, Montmorency County Conservation Club, The Shelden Foundation, Canada Creek Ranch, our donors, NEMCOG and our UBRC Board of Directors.

Additional thanks are extended to Ken Reed and crew for their dedication to this beautiful river system, to MDNR Fisheries Biologist, Tim Cwalinski for his guidance and counsel, Heather Rawlings of USFWS for her advocacy on behalf of the Upper Black, Joe Jarecki, watershed landowner, Richard Bruot, volunteers Bill Houston and Tom Carlson, from the Montmorency Conservation Club, and Gary Isaman, Jim Kurbel and the rest of the great members of Headwaters TU for their tireless efforts on behalf of this cold-water jewel.

I'd also like to extend our collective thanks and congratulations to Carol Moncrieff Rose, the long-time Chair of the Upper Black River Council. As most of you may know, in 2020 Carol was appointed by Governor Whitmer to the Michigan Natural Resources Commission where she now serves as its Chair. Although it was necessary for her to step down from her official position at the UBRC, she has remained available to assist all of us during this time of organizational transition.

We'll be in touch as we get closer to a time when we plan our Spring meeting. Until then, please stay well and safe.

Sincerely,

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The mission of the UBRC is to restore and maintain the outstanding water resources and natural brook trout fishery of the Upper Black River Watershed

AERIAL VIEW OF 2020 IN-STREAM PROJECT LIMITS

(from N45° 3' 32"/W84° 26' 44" to N45° 3' 46"/W84° 27' 22")

click for: [Google Earth Link](#) then click "download"



2020 CANADA CREEK STREAM BLOCKAGE REMOVAL (one site) - BEFORE AND AFTER



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SAMPLE IN-STREAM STRUCTURES - BEFORE & AFTER
(Click [Here to view all 270+ before & after project photos](#) - 2020 work season)

Waypoint - SD22-11 - N45° 3.558'/W84° 26.767'



Waypoint - SD22-21 - N45° 3.583'/W84° 26.831'



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SAMPLE IN-STREAM STRUCTURES - BEFORE & AFTER (Continued)

Waypoint - SD23-08 - N45° 3.609'/W84° 26.856'



Waypoint - SD23-11 - N45° 3.622'/W84° 26.868'



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SAMPLE IN-STREAM STRUCTURES - BEFORE & AFTER (Continued)

Waypoint - TH1-04 - N45° 3.740'/W84° 27.343'



Waypoint - TH01-09 - N45° 3.748'/W84° 27.356'



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