



Upper Black River Council 2023 Council and River Work Annual Report December 22, 2023

This year, 2023 marked the 30th anniversary of its creation and brought about another productive season for the [Upper Black River Council](#) family. The Upper Black River Council (UBRC) was established in 1993, and represents a unique partnership of local, state and national governmental entities, non-profit conservation and sportsmen's organizations, private landowners and interested citizens dedicated to the restoration and preservation of the Upper Black River watershed.

On April 19, 2023, the members of the Upper Black River Council gathered for our spring meeting which was once again hosted by our longtime partners, Canada Creek Ranch. Twenty-four people assembled for this year's meeting who collectively represented the Michigan DNR, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Canada Creek Ranch, Black River Ranch, Huron Pines, the Pigeon River Country State Forest, a handful of TU chapters, members of the UBRC board, our in-stream habitat contractor and numerous anglers and trappers. It is through these planning meetings that the goals and priorities for the coming work season are developed.



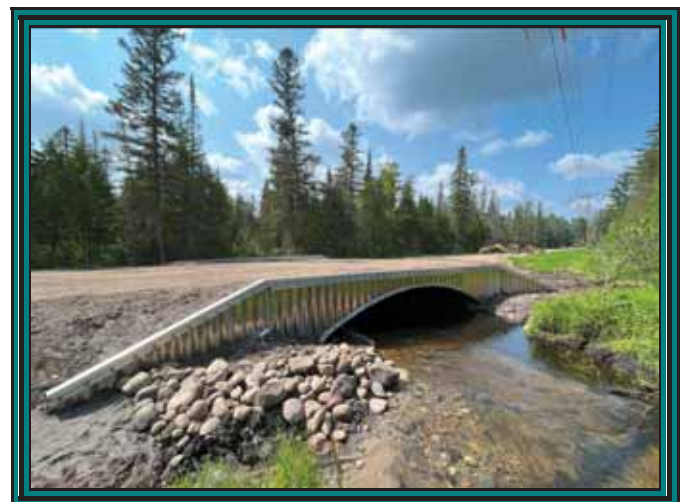
In early May, Upper Black River Council volunteers, in cooperation with the Fisheries Division of the DNR, deployed water temperature loggers in the Upper Black and its tributaries. These temp loggers record data every hour, 24/7 throughout the summer. Then, in the Fall, these are retrieved and the data collected is added to that which has been assembled over the past 20+ years.



On May 13th, the Aquatic Invertebrate stream survey was conducted under the sponsorship of the [Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited](#). This annual event organizes interested volunteers who, with the technical assistance of Tip-of-the-Mitt Watershed staff, sample areas of Black River stream bottom in an effort to assess the health of its sub-surface, non-fishery residents. It's always amazing to see the extent of the life living on, and under, rocks and submerged wood and the importance of these systems to the overall health of the river.



Thanks to Huron Pines and its other project partners, another Black River road/stream crossing project was completed in the early summer - this one on located on Otsego County's Sparr Road. These new crossings allow for the unobstructed flow of the river and a reduction of sediment being introduced to the system which can adversely affect aquatic habitat.



As final approval from the Department of Energy, Great Lakes and Environment (EGLE) was being received for the UBRC's next two permits, our habitat enhancement contractor, Ken Reed Contracting, Inc., conducted a review of past in-stream work for our project partner, Canada Creek Ranch within its association boundaries.

Soon thereafter, Ken was able to begin work on the Main and East branch of the Black River. Early season work included the removal/stabilization of multiple blockages caused by seasonal high water events. The 2023-28 EGLE permit was issued in early July and the work is to consist of the placement of natural woody debris, whole tree revetment and deflection logs at 25 way-point locations extending over an estimated 3.0-mile thread of river. This project represents a continuation of a partnership effort established between the MDNR Fisheries, US Fish and Wildlife, and Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU) together with over a dozen additional partners of the UBRC.

The primary objectives include the creation of diverse in-stream habitat, increasing surface area for periphyton and macro-invertebrates, scour sand, uncover cobble and rock, create additional holding cover for yearling and older brook trout, create additional cover for young of year (age 0) brook trout and increase survival to age 1 in an area where reproduction is highest for this river, and add natural woody materials to previously placed structures which are not dense enough to accomplish goals.

Sample Photographs of In-Stream Habitat Enhancement



In addition to the permitted in-stream work, a second EGLE permit was secured for the repair of an extensive erosion site located on the High Banks reach of the East Branch of the Black River. We thank U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and especially Heather Rawlings of their Alpena office for her continued support of the UBRC. In addition to the great work performed by Ken Reed Contracting, we thank the many other individuals and donors for their funding support as well as the in-kind labor provided by UBRC volunteers.

“High Banks” Erosion Site Repair Sample Photographs (Before & After)



As has been the case since the inception of the Upper Black River Council and its predecessor the Upper Black River Watershed Restoration Committee, all of the funds raised go back into this resource or its advancement. All administration and program management is conducted by volunteers who receive no compensation. Although this is a cost-effective operational model, it frequently limits our ability to respond to new initiatives proposed for the UBRC as quickly as we would have liked.

In the past 12 months, the UBRC has received \$43,065 in funding support and expended \$39,700 for programs, support services, and non-profit/organizational filings.

We again extend our thanks to project partners which include 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 Sheldon Foundation, Canada Creek Ranch, our donors, NEMCOG and our UBRC Board of Directors.

We look forward to seeing all of our friends and partners at our Spring meeting, but if any of you require more information or details regarding any of our projects, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

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