

**Cass River Greenway
2024 – Year in Review
By CRG Chairman, Robert Zeilinger**



Cass River Greenway
c/o 240 w. Genesee St.
Frankenmuth, MI 48734

Organized in 2007, the Cass River Greenway has been working to increase recreational use and improve the environmental well being of the Cass River.

Goals Developed by the Cass River Greenway Committee:

- Develop Recreation Opportunities on the Cass River and along its corridor
- Encourage Preservation of Wildlife Habitat and Critical Natural Lands
- Improve Water Quality of the Cass River

Paddling Activity on the Cass River Water Trail

Currently there are two kayak/canoe liveries on the Cass River Water Trail; Frankenmuth Kayak Adventures in Frankenmuth, and Wesleyan Woods Canoe & Kayak Trips in Vassar.

Based on their feedback on booked trips and estimates of privately owned kayak trips, it is estimated that over 1500 paddlers use the river annually.

13th Annual Paddle & Swim

This year's event was held on June 22. Similar to previous events, the paddle from Vassar and Tuscola to Frankenmuth was well attended with many paddlers.

Lighted Kayak Paddle

Frankenmuth Parks & Rec sponsored a summer evening Christmas on the Cass River Kayaks event on August 3. Approximately 30 kayaks, decorated in Christmas themed lights, paddled from the Heritage Park launch downstream to River Place and back.

Great Lakes Rendezvous

The annual event was held in Davis Park, Bridgeport, on August 16 - 18.

Canoeing for Conservation

A paddle from M-13 Boat Launch to Wickes Park in Saginaw was sponsored by the Saginaw Conservation District on July 16. The event included information about aquatic invasive species and practice of proper boat cleaning techniques at the end of the trip.

Lake Sturgeon Releases

The restoration of lake sturgeon in the Saginaw Bay continues annually, sponsored primarily by US Fish & Wildlife and MI DNR. The annual releases occur at the Cass, Flint, Shiawassee and Tittabawassee Rivers. Approximately 300 fish are released in

August and September in each of the four rivers. St. Lorenz Lutheran School participates in the Sturgeon in the Classroom Program annually (one fish).

Cass River Log Jam Removal

The committee recognizes that log jams are an ongoing concern and large log jams are very expensive to remove. The committee is interested in improving timely feedback regarding small blockages in the river so action can be taken before they form into large jams.

2024 Phragmites Control Plan

Once again, we received support from the Tuscola County Road Commission regarding phragmites control. The TCRC allocated funding to treat phragmites in Vassar township.

Saginaw Bay Area CISMA (co-operative invasive species management area)

The organization's director provided an overview of their activities. In addition to providing resources to control invasive species, the CISMA group provides various training workshops such as; Paddling Safety Training, Invasive Species Identification and Control, and Boat Wash Events. To learn more about them visit their website.

Live Views of the Cass River Added

Thanks to a generous donation from the late Duane Hartman, new cameras now offer live looks of three Cass River sites, including the Cass River rock ramp, the Memorial Park boat launch and the Heritage Park kayak launch. Views can be accessed on the Cass River WaterTrail website as well as the City of Frankenmuth website.

Cass River Launch Activities

-Beyer Road Launch

Over the years, river ice and flooding have damaged/removed the lower entry steps of the launch. Funding from Tri-Star Trust, Frankenmuth Jaycees and Frankenmuth Community Foundation has been awarded to repair and improve the launch facilities. Design work and an EGLE permit have been approved. Installation is planned for 2025.

-Caro Dam

US Fish & Wildlife Service has granted the Tuscola County EDC seed money to further develop plans and cost estimates to repair the dam and recreate a recreational pond upstream of the dam. A portage path around the dam is also being considered. A preliminary report regarding options and costs is expected to be available early in 2025.

-Land Transfer, Tuscola County Parks

Tuscola County has obtained title to three parcels along the Cass River in the vicinity of Chambers and Washburn Roads, in Indianfields Township. Many remember this property as part of the abandoned "Camp Tuscola" and hospital properties. The property has been assigned to the Tuscola County Parks & Rec Commission for development and

administration. The long-range plan includes development of a public park and kayak launch. This launch would be the next upstream launch from our M-46 launch.

Cass City State Game Area – Kelly Road Access

A rustic “walk-in river access site” was completed in 2023. This year, funding was secured from the Tuscola County Community Foundation for the design and installation of signage for the launch and surrounding area. This site is located upstream of Cass City on the south branch of the Cass River.

-Evergreen Park, Sanilac County

Sanilac County Parks Commission is in the process of expanding and adding a kayak launch at their existing Evergreen Park. This park is located upstream of Cass City on the south branch of the Cass River, just off M-53.

Water Quality Monitoring Project

An extensive water quality monitoring project of the Cass River sponsored by the Cass River Greenway was completed in 2014. The results indicated the water quality of the Cass River was “good” and safe for recreational purposes. (See our website www.cassriver.org for details of the study). The study did indicate the two most important areas for improvement were silt from erosion and occasional high levels of e-coli bacteria.

Previous studies conducted by EGLE (formerly DEQ) on tributary creeks of the Cass River indicated frequent occurrences of high levels of e-coli bacteria, above safe water quality conditions. Sources of the bacteria were not identified.

In 2023 a grant submitted by Saginaw County Conservation District, in partnership with EGLE and Cass River Greenway, to monitor four major creeks in the Cass River Watershed for e-coli contamination was approved. The creeks to be monitored were the Dead, Cole, Perry and Millington Creeks.

In 2024 over 300 water samples from 21 sites were collected and analyzed at Saginaw Valley State University. The lab at SVSU has the capability to determine not only the presence and level of bacteria, but also whether the source is of human or animal origin. A report on the results will be available early 2015.

A special thank you to our partner federal, state and county agencies, our donors and grant funders, our partner municipalities and universities, and our faithful volunteers.

January 28, 2025