

**Cass River Greenway  
2025 – 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

**Cass River WaterTrail Receives State Recognition**

The Cass River WaterTrail has been awarded State WaterTrail Designation. This is a significant award that recognizes the efforts of the organization over the years to create a sustainable and highly valued recreation destination in our state. We are now one of eleven watertrails in the state to receive this award.

**14<sup>th</sup> Annual Paddle & Swim**

This year's event was held on June 21. Similar to previous events, the paddle from Vassar and Tuscola to Frankenmuth was well attended with many paddlers.

**Caro Kayak Safety Training**

A kayak safety training class was held at Caro's Chippewa Landing Park on June 12. The event was funded by the Tuscola County Community Foundation.

**Cass River Fishing Derby**

A Cass River Rough Fish Derby was held in Sanilac County's Evergreen Park, located upstream of Cass City on the south branch of the Cass, just off M-53. Evergreen Park has recently been renovated with additional camping sites, pavilions, playgrounds and a universally accessible kayak launch. The event, held on June 7 (free fishing weekend), was designed as a family affair and was very well attended. Plans are to make this an annual event.

**Christmas Kayaks on the Cass**

Frankenmuth Parks & Rec sponsored a summer evening event on August 2 featuring decorated Christmas themed lighted kayaks. Approximately 35 kayaks participated, paddling between the Heritage Park launch and the Covered Bridge.

## **Great Lakes Rendezvous**

The annual event was held in Davis Park, Bridgeport, on August 15-17.

## **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).

## **2025 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 and Tuscola townships.

## **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 was provided to repair and improve the launch facilities. The repairs were completed in September.

### **-Caro Dam**

US Fish & Wildlife Service has granted the Tuscola County EDC seed money to further develop plans and cost estimates to repair or eliminate the failing dam. A report regarding options and costs was presented at a public meeting in Caro. Extending the Cass River WaterTrail upstream of the dam is dependent on what decisions are made.

### **-Chippewa Landing Park, Caro**

This is a well-equipped park located upstream of the Caro dam. The city of Caro plans to install a kayak launch at the site and funding provided by the Tuscola County Community Foundation and the City of Caro will cover the cost of a 3-sided informational/watertrail map kiosk.

### **-Land Transfer, Tuscola County Parks**

Tuscola County has obtained title to three parcels along the Cass River in the vicinity of Chambers Road and M-81, 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. Funding from Michigan Trails and Greenways Association for a site plan has been received.

### **-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/Pinney Foundation and Nancy & Chris Barrios 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.

### **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](http://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 was finalized in July 2025. It confirmed high levels of e-coli in all four creeks in virtually every sampling period. It also confirmed human waste caused e-coli present in all creeks except Millington creek. Follow up plans are in process.

### **Cass River Greenway Named Conservation Volunteer of the Year**

As a result of our work on the water quality monitoring project, the Saginaw County Conservation District awarded the CRG Volunteer of the Year.

**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 9, 2026