

**Cass River Greenway
2019 – 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 now been working for over a decade 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

Goal – Develop Recreation Opportunities on the Cass River and along its corridor:

The design and construction of a water trail on the Cass River has been our top priority for this goal. In 2018 the Cass River Water Trail was expanded to include 13 public access sites, and now extends 37.5 miles from the M-46 Bridge (between Caro and Vassar) downstream and into the Saginaw River, ending at Wickes Park in the City of Saginaw. A number of improvements occurred in 2019, including access site improvements at Caine Road Launch, Hoffmann Park and the M-13 Boat Launch. Also, a floating dock, universal accessible kayak launch was installed at Wickes Park. Log jams at bridge foundations and across the river continue to be a problem on the Cass River. State and County road agencies have done a good job removing log jams from bridges. The Cass River Greenway and Bridgeport Charter Township, with funding support from the McNally Foundation, Star of the West Milling Co., Mike Young Buick-GMC and Frankenmuth Credit Union Foundation for Our Communities, partnered to remove one large log jam downstream of Davis Park. There is a second log jam in the same area that is currently blocking passage and needs to be removed.

Paddling activity continues to increase on the Cass River. River related activities this year included the 8th Annual Paddle and Swim, The Tri-Bavaria Triathlon, The Great Lakes Rendezvous, The Walk-Through History and the 11th Annual Cass River Cleanup. An interactive video mapping project, Terrain 360, was completed this summer. The project was funded by I-69 Thumb Region Prosperity Network and Saginaw County Parks. It involved floating a “raft” down the river and taking photographs using 5 cameras covering 360 degrees every 40 feet of travel. The photos are then edited into an interactive video, allowing one to “float” the river using a computer or smart device. The Cass River was mapped from Evergreen Park on the south branch all the way to Wickes Park in the City of Saginaw. Map section videos will be added to our water trail website, www.cassriverwatertrail.org, prior to the 2020 paddling season.

Finally, a new organization has been formed – The Cass River Water Trail Coalition. The membership of the organization consists of the “owners” of the 13 access sites plus

several support groups including the Frankenmuth CVB, Saginaw County Parks and Cass River Greenway. The primary purpose of the Coalition is to cooperatively maintain and improve the water trail and lead the effort to achieve State and National Water Trail Recognition Status.

Goal – Encourage Preservation of Wildlife Habitat and Critical Natural Lands:

Phragmites control continues to be an active initiative for the Cass River Greenway. The Tuscola County Road Commission has been a major supporter of us in this regard. In 2019 they budgeted funds to treat roadside phragmites in three townships, Arbelá, Millington and Vassar. We are requesting their assistance again in 2020.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a final report of the multi-year fish passage study of the Cass River Rock Ramp. The bottom line - targeted species for spawning fish passage have been confirmed to migrate through the rock ramp, allowing them to access spawning areas upstream not available for 150 years. Over time, this should increase fishing opportunities on the Cass River.

In addition, fish stocking is occurring. In 2019, 68,000 walleye fingerlings were released into the Cass River. Also, a 20-year stocking program of lake sturgeon has begun which will include a yearly release of 250 sturgeon into the Cass River, one of four area rivers selected for this stocking program. The program is intended to re-introduce lake sturgeon in the Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron.

Goal – Improve Water Quality of the Cass River:

The 11th Annual Cass River Cleanup was held on September 21. Approximately 55 volunteers attended the event which was headquartered at Kappan Tree Service on Hurds Corner Road. The group cleaned 4 miles of river in Ellington Township, between Caro and Cass City. We also received funding assistance from the Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy to dispose of large commercial tires that our cleanup crews have removed from the river the past few years. Our Cass River Cleanup events have now cleaned nearly 50 miles of river, collecting hundreds of tires, car-truck-farm equipment parts, furniture, barrels, cans and bottles.

Next year's event will address the last section of river to be cleaned between Caro and Cass City.

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.