

Memorandum of Agreement
Grand River Watershed Partnership
Draft # 3 – July 26, 2016

Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance (UGRWA)
Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds (MGROW)
Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW)

Background/The Resource: The Grand River, at 262 miles, is the longest river in Michigan. The watershed is the second largest (5,572 square miles) and most populated in the state. More than one and a-half million citizens live within the watershed, and thousands more visit and use the river every year.

Stewardship History: In the early 1980's, there was a single Grand River Watershed Council, organized to address issues of the entire watershed. However, it was not able to survive, due largely to the large, highly populated and diverse nature of the watershed. The various segments of the river/watershed all offer vastly different values and opportunities, and present vastly different challenges.

Following the 1990 Grand River Expedition, organized protection efforts began to take off, starting with formation of the Grand River Environmental Action Team (GREAT) in Jackson County. In 2003, the Upper Grand River Watershed Council formed, centered in Jackson, and focusing on the headwaters area, from northern Hillsdale County to Eaton Rapids. In 2009, the group reorganized under authority of the Michigan Watershed Alliance Act. They are now the Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance (UGRWA).

The Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds (LGROW) began as a coalition of storm water regulated committees in the lower watershed that are members of the Grand Valley Metro Council (GVMC). The Lower Grand is defined as the Grand River watershed from Portland downstream to Lake Michigan. It includes the entire watersheds of the Thornapple, Flat and Rogue rivers. Initially, this group banded together to coordinate efforts under the NPDES regulatory process. In 2009, they expanded their objectives to provide basin-wide oversight, implement watershed-wide initiatives and prioritize water quality concerns. LGROW remains as an agency attached to the GVMC.

The Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds (MGROW) formed in 2011 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. The Middle Grand is defined as the Grand River from Eaton Rapids to Lyons, and includes the entire watersheds of the Maple, Looking Glass and Red Cedar rivers.

Goals and objectives of all three groups are very similar, and include:

- Protect and enhance watershed values, including water quality;
- Provide public education about the historic, ecologic, recreational and economic values of the river and its communities;
- Develop individual and collective stewardship for watershed values;
- Promote recreational use and enhancement of public facilities, information and safety; and
- Coordinate with sub-watershed groups.

Partnership Efforts: Following Expedition 2010, and after formation of MGROW, the three groups met in 2011 to discuss common issues and identify ways to join together in protection of the Grand River Watershed. Little coordination occurred between 2011 and 2015, but recent discussions have underscored the advisability of formalizing this Partnership.

Agreements: The three member groups agree to form and maintain the Grand River Watershed Partnership:

- The partnership will meet a minimum of twice a year to discuss common issues, objectives and projects – hosting will be on a rotating basis;
- Leadership of the Partnership will be shared on a biennial rotating basis, beginning with LGROW, then UGRWA, and then MGROW and so on ...;
- The partnership will strive to conduct a watershed-wide public forum every two years – hosting will be on a rotating basis;
- The member groups will work with the Governor’s Office, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other watershed partners to coordinate planning for a headwaters to Lake Michigan Grand River Water Trail, including issues common to all such as signage, education, safety, publicity, etc. as appropriate;
- The member groups and their partners will each oversee Grand River Water Trail implementation within their individual service areas;
- Member groups will seek resolutions of support for the Trail from local communities and others within their respective service areas;
- Members will share information on common issues and opportunities, including funding;
- LGROW will investigate the feasibility of a watershed data collection and management system;
- MGROW will organize and conduct future educational expeditions on the Grand River in 2020 and on tributary streams as appropriate; and
- MGROW will develop and maintain a Grand River Partnership Facebook ® page, to share information on educational resources and programs, action alerts, upcoming activities, grant opportunities, recent research, etc.

Fiscal Commitments: The three member groups will incur no additional financial duty for the tasks described above, except as agreed to by unanimous commitment by all parties to this agreement.

Effective Date: This MOA will be effective on the date of the last party signing the MOA below. By signing below, parties agree with all terms and provisions of this MOA.

Amendment: This MOA may be amended from time to time by mutual agreement of the parties involved in a written notification signed by all parties.

Termination: This agreement may be terminated by written notification of the parties.

Signatures:

Upper Grand River Watershed Alliance

Signature and Title

Date

Middle Grand River Organization of Watersheds

Signature and Title

Date

Lower Grand River Organization of Watersheds

Signature and Title

Date