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River Raisin WATERSHED COUNCIL
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STREAMLINES

Protecting and restoring the River Raisin Watershed for over 50 years!

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THE RIVER RAISIN FLOWS FREELY IN BROOKLYN

After years of planning, permitting, collaboration, and construction, the Brooklyn Dam Restoration Project has reached a major milestone.

On **September 24**, River Raisin Watershed Council representatives and project partners gathered in Brooklyn to walk the completed project site and see the restored stretch of river firsthand.

The project removed the former Brooklyn Dam and **restored approximately 2,600 feet** of the River Raisin using Natural Channel Design techniques. The work included creating rock rapids, reconnecting the river channel and floodplain, and restoring native habitat along the river corridor.

Most importantly, removing the dam has reconnected approximately **42 miles** of upstream habitat with the River Raisin downstream of Brooklyn, opening an important stretch of the watershed to fish and other aquatic species.

"RRWC worked for 5 years to obtain necessary approvals and $2 million in funding necessary to make this project happen. Once begun, construction took just 2 months. It was all worth it to connect 42 miles of quality upstream fishery to the River Raisin downstream of the Village. This will benefit the communities along the river for generations to come!" said **RRWC Chair Harry Sheehan**.

While major construction is complete, the work isn't quite finished. Trees, shrubs, and



live stakes will be planted this fall to further stabilize the site and establish native vegetation along the restored river corridor.

A project of this scale takes many hands. RRWC is grateful for the collaboration and support of the Jackson County Drain Office, Village of Brooklyn, Michigan Department of Transportation, Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy, Michigan Department of Natural Resources, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and the many others who helped bring the project from an idea to a restored, connected river.

After five years of work behind the scenes, seeing the River Raisin flowing freely through the restored site is an exciting moment and one that will benefit the watershed for years to come.





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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK WITH SEAN DENNIS



It has been another year of change at the Council. I wanted to share some of what has been going on here, because you are a major part of what we do.

First, Lydia Lopez has stepped back from her full-time role with us. To be honest, that was a hard one. Lydia poured a lot into this organization, and we are better for it. The good news is that she's not going anywhere. She's staying on as a contractor with us, so we still get to lean on her experience and her heart for the watershed.



Change is never perfect, or perfectly clean. However, I feel good about the direction we are headed in. We have a dedicated team, supportive partners, and a community that continues to show up for the watershed. The River Raisin watershed is still the reason we do what we do, and there is a lot of good work yet to be done.

Thanks for coming along for the ride.

Small Gifts, Lasting Impact

Our river doesn't take a day off. It's there every morning, flowing through our towns and cities, whether we are paying attention or not.

Caring for the river and its watershed works the same way. We can't just do it when we feel like it. It can't just be something that is done when the budget allows.

That's why I'm writing to ask you to consider becoming a monthly donor.

Here's why it matters: A monthly gift to the organization helps us plan ahead instead of crossing our fingers on the next grant. It keeps us steady and moving forward when things are uncertain, and it means we can keep investing in the people and programs that serve our mission and your community. Whether it's $10 or $50 a month, it adds up to something we can depend on.

You can set it up automatically on our website by clicking on the donate button.

Thank you for considering partnering with us, and thank you for caring about our watershed.



A SEASON IN THE WATERSHED BY BLAKE MEHLHOSE

From the Classroom to the River

This past February, I walked through the doors of the AJ Smith House in Tecumseh as the River Raisin Watershed Council's newest intern. I came to RRWC from Central Michigan University, where I studied Outdoor and Environmental Recreation with a minor in Event Management, and this internship was the final step of my degree.

I knew I wanted a role that combined being outdoors with working alongside people, but I didn't fully realize how well a single river could bring those two things together. Looking back, it's been a year full of muddy boots, curious kids, and more macroinvertebrates than I ever expected to meet.

Boots in the Water

Some of my favorite days were spent knee-deep in local streams through our Adopt-A-Stream program. From spring sampling to Bug ID Days, I loved seeing volunteers and students work together to discover what's living in our waterways.

I also helped secure a $4,000 grant from Bell's Brewing to support the program, one of my proudest accomplishments as an intern.

In June, I helped lead our summer nature camps at Fernstrom Park in Petersburg, where campers explored everything from fish and pollinators to local history and water quality. It was easily one of the highlights of my summer.

Bringing people to the river

Throughout the spring, I visited Adrian elementary schools to teach second graders about watersheds, helped with our Native Plant Sale, and developed educational presentations for young students.

My main internship project was the River Raisin Watershed Quest, a GooseChase scavenger hunt that encouraged participants to explore more than a dozen locations across Lenawee County. My goal was simple: help people discover the places they drive past every day and see them in a new way.



I also had a front-row seat to something much bigger: the removal of the Brooklyn Dam, reopening about 42 miles of upstream habitat. Walking the finished site in September was a powerful reminder of what this council and its partners can accomplish together.

What I Learned and Who Taught Me

If there's one lesson I'll carry with me, it's that a watershed is just as much about people as it is about water. From volunteers and farmers to teachers and families, this work depends on people who care.

I was lucky to learn from a small team that accomplishes a lot. Lydia Lopez taught me more about the watershed than any textbook ever could, while Executive Director Sean Dennis trusted me with meaningful projects from day one. Benny Woith and Ivy McClelland were the glue of our office, keeping everything organized and on track. Working with partners like Dr. Carley Kratz also showed me how much more we can accomplish together.

Looking Back

My time with RRWC gave me the opportunity to learn, explore, and connect with people who genuinely care about protecting our watershed. From muddy stream days to classroom visits, each experience helped me better understand the connection between people and the river in their own backyard.

Thank you to everyone who made my internship such a memorable experience. I can't wait to see where the current takes us next.

We want to extend a special thank you to our 2026 donors!

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