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Dear GRNA volunteers,

Even though the weather has been a bit of a rollercoaster the past few weeks, I've been in an almost constant state of giddiness throughout the entire spring season. It feels like every day brings a "first of the year," a new treat awaiting me outside every open window or around every bend in the trail. A few days ago, I heard my first white-crowned sparrow of the year, and just this morning, I spotted my first trout lily bloom nodding above the twin mottled leaves. The whole season always feels like such a celebration of life, and I'm hard-pressed to think of a more renewing and joyful time of year to get outside.

There's also much to be done at GRNA this time of year, so while you're getting outside this spring and feeding your soul with some well-deserved sunshine, consider lending a hand at GRNA! From stream monitoring to Spring Stewardship Day and invasive species pulls, there are plenty of opportunities to get outside and do good while you're at it.

Happy springtime, and I hope to see you at one or more of our upcoming events!

Emily Burke  
Conservation & Education Specialist  
[emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org)

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Now that the busy season is upon us,

**PLEASE FILL OUT YOUR VOLUNTEER WAIVER!**

If you plan to volunteer in 2022, we need you to fill out and sign a volunteer waiver. This must be done every year. Though you have all already done this in the past, in order to be cleared for volunteering in 2022, we need to have a current copy on file.

Steps for completing your waiver:

1. Click **HERE** to access the waiver
2. Print it
3. Fill it out and sign it
4. Submit it using either of these options:
  - Scan it and email it to [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org)
  - Bring the paper version with you next time you come to the Center

Alternatively, if you'd rather just complete your waiver in person, you can stop into the Center Saturdays and Sundays from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm to fill out a hard copy.

Thank you, and thanks to everyone who has already submitted their 2022 waivers!

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## UPCOMING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

### **STREAM MONITORING TRAINING**

**Sat, May 7 from 9:00 am to 11:30 am**

Twice each year, GRNA monitors several sites along the 3 major streams running through the natural area to assess the health of our waterways. Every year, we train new volunteers to help us collect this data and contribute to keeping GRNA's creeks healthy. If you're interested in learning how to collect this data, join us for this training! Pre-registration is required - email Emily at [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org)



### **BUTTERFLY MONITORING VIRTUAL TRAINING**

**Fri, May 13 from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm**

GRNA's butterfly monitors adopt a section of trail and walk it regularly throughout the summer, identifying and documenting butterfly populations for the Michigan Butterfly Network (MiBN), a statewide program that aims to better understand the distribution and abundance of butterflies across Michigan. The butterfly data collected at GRNA is also used to help guide our land management decisions. To become a butterfly monitor, attend this year's MiBN virtual training session through Kalamazoo Nature Center (register [here](#)) and then contact James at [james@grassriver.org](mailto:james@grassriver.org) to be set up with a monitoring route at GRNA.



## PLANT AND TREE IDENTIFICATION

**Thurs, June 2 from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm**

Being able to identify plant and tree species in the natural area is a great skill



for any GRNA volunteer, and is useful during many different volunteer projects, including stream monitoring, parcel monitoring, land and trail stewardship, and working in the native plant gardens. Join us to build or brush up on your identification skills and learn strategies for differentiating lookalike plants. We'll meet at the Grass River Center and head out on the trails from there. Email Emily at [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org) to sign up.

## UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

### SPRING STREAM MONITORING

**Sat, May 14 from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm**

New and seasoned volunteers of all ages are invited to join us as we collect data as part of our biannual stream monitoring program. This year, teams will be collecting habitat data and macroinvertebrates (creek "bugs") at four sites along Finch Creek and then will return to the Grass River Center to sort through their critter samples. Pre-registration is required - email Emily at [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org). Note: we strongly encourage new volunteers to attend the Stream Monitoring Training on May 7th to become familiar with collection and sorting methods.



### GARLIC MUSTARD PULL

**Fri, May 20 at 9:30 am**

Come help GRNA caretake one of its outlying parcels by pulling garlic mustard, an invasive plant. No prior experience is necessary; everyone will be briefed on the day of the event in the particulars of how to identify and remove this weed. We will meet at the outlying parcel, which is immediately east of 7891 Green St, Bellaire (along the south shore of Clam Lake). Carpooling is encouraged to reduce the number of cars parked along this narrow residential street. Bring



gardening gloves if you'd like them, though they're not necessary. There's no need to pre-register for this event.

### **SPRING STEWARDSHIP DAY**

**Sat, May 21  
from 9:00 am  
to 12:00 pm**

As spring rains are falling and

flower buds begin emerging, it is time to join in the spring cleaning at GRNA! Trail grooming, garden weeding, and window shining are a few of the many tasks for freshening up our grounds and Center in preparation for summer. No experience is necessary, just a pair of gloves, a "spring" in your step, and an open spirit. Pre-registration is encouraged - email Brian at [stewardship@grassriver.org](mailto:stewardship@grassriver.org).



### **RIVERFEST VOLUNTEER**

**Ongoing through August**

Each year, GRNA holds our primary fundraiser in August. This year the date is Thurs, Aug 11th. A committee of volunteers helps us plan and execute this event, and there is always room for more help in several areas. Jobs that are ongoing include soliciting auction donations - we particularly need help for this in Elk Rapids and Traverse City - and planning the event itself. On the day of the event, we need help setting up, staffing the registration table, serving as a greeter, showing people to their seats, being a spotter at the

live auction, taking photographs, staffing check out at the end of the evening, and tearing down after the event. If you're interested in any of these jobs, please contact Betsy at [betsy@grassriver.org](mailto:betsy@grassriver.org) or at (231) 838-0269.

### **GIFT SHOP MANAGER**

**Ongoing**

We are looking for a volunteer to keep the inventory of items in our Grass River Center gift shop - including nature books, art, games, GRNA swag, and more - organized, priced, and well-stocked. If you are a detail-oriented person who can commit to checking in on the gift shop every few weeks, this may be the opportunity for you. Previous merchandising experience is a plus. Email Sheila at [sheila@grassriver.org](mailto:sheila@grassriver.org) if you're willing to lend a hand.



**FRONT  
DESK  
DOCENT**  
**Ongoing**  
GRNA is in  
need of a few  
volunteer  
docents to  
help us cover



the front desk of the Grass River Center. This position involves opening and closing the Center, greeting visitors and answering questions, performing simple point of sale transactions from our gift shop, and light housekeeping duties to keep the Center looking tidy. If you have excellent customer service skills, are knowledgeable about Grass River or are willing to learn, and want to give back to GRNA in a meaningful way, contact James at [james@grassriver.org](mailto:james@grassriver.org). Training will be provided. From January through April, the Center is open on Saturdays and Sundays only from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm.

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## **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: PAM ESTERLINE**

This month, we're putting the spotlight on GRNA volunteer Pam Esterline. Pam has been an active volunteer since 2014, when she and her husband moved to Alden. With her wide range of environmental knowledge, can-do attitude, and decades of experience as a Montessori teacher and administrator, Pam is one of our most versatile volunteers, lending a hand for event planning, in the native plant gardens, during educational programs, and on the Riverfest committee. We recently caught up with her to hear about her time at GRNA over the years:



### **What inspires you to volunteer for GRNA?**

I have always enjoyed the outdoors: camping, hiking, and gardening or just taking in the beauty of a sunrise or sunset. Our family spent summer vacations camping, hiking and backpacking. One of the first things we did when we moved to Alden was go to the Alden District Library. My husband and I are avid readers and love a Library. I began volunteering at the Alden Library and learned about Grass River Natural Area from other Grass River volunteers. I began volunteering with the education programs and then volunteered for a number of events and then joined the Riverfest and event committees. I love the mission of Grass River, which combines conservation, preservation, education, and enjoyment of the natural environment. The staff and volunteers are a wonderful, caring group of people. I thoroughly enjoy working with everyone.

### **What's the neatest thing you've learned since you started volunteering with GRNA?**

I have learned to appreciate the beauty of the wetlands. I have learned so much from the educators and naturalists. I am impressed with their knowledge and enthusiasm and their ability to convey that to children.

### **What do you wish more people knew about GRNA?**

I wish people knew just how knowledgeable the staff is and how everyone works so hard to preserve this gem in Antrim County. We are lucky to have a group of people who are dedicated to our environment's well-being.

### **When you aren't volunteering, what do you spend time doing?**

I am on the Board of Trustees for the Alden District Library. I volunteer at Glacial Hills. I hike,



kayak, do yoga, and belong to several book clubs. I am also a mother of 2 and a grandmother of 4. My youngest grandchild, 6, lives in Antrim County and loves Grass River and asks to go there. He especially loved the story walks during COVID. His mom took him in a front pack before he could walk. We do family hikes and when we have visitors, we take them to Grass



River to show off our beautiful environment and how it is being preserved.

#### **Any fun facts you want to tell us about?**

I am a former teacher and administrator. I began my career as a science and math teacher at the secondary level. I then discovered Montessori Education and earned my masters in early Childhood Education. I am a consultant with a Montessori Teacher Education program and do on-site accreditation visits for the American Montessori Society. My specialty is early childhood education.

## **IT'S TIME FOR GRNA'S ANNUAL NATIVE PLANT SALE**

**Pre-order garden kits now  
by clicking here**

**or purchase single species  
quarts at the event at GRNA  
on Saturday, June 4th from  
10:00 am - 1:00 pm**



Grass River Natural Area is a nonprofit organization that has flourished for fifty-two years because of the generous support of people who value our mission "to manage the Grass River Natural Area, conserve and protect its watershed, and provide opportunities that increase knowledge, appreciation, and community-wide stewardship of the natural environment".

If you believe in our mission and want to help us fulfill it for many years to come, please click on the Donate button below. Your support is greatly appreciated.

# DONATE



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