

[View this email in your browser](#)



Dear GRNA volunteers,

The natural area is starting to show the first early signs of spring, however far away it may seem on these icy, frigid days. The titmice are singing, the woodpeckers are drumming, and the sun is staying out well past 6:00 pm. In the next few weeks, the maple sap will rise, red-winged blackbirds will return to the cattails, wood frogs will start calling from the vernal pools, and skunk cabbage will unfurl from the melting snow. I hope you get a chance to witness these springtime phenomena; to me, something as small as the first pussy willows emerging from barren twigs feels like nothing short of a miracle at this time of year.

If you want to take a deeper dive into the magic of springtime, consider helping us tap trees to make maple syrup or signing up to monitor amphibians at our vernal pools. Or, if you're not one for the early spring slush, check out our ongoing indoor volunteer opportunities instead.

Happy transition to springtime, all!

Emily Burke
Conservation & Education Specialist
emily@grassriver.org

INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITY

GRNA is currently accepting applications for our 2022 Environmental Education Summer Internship! This is a paid position and a great way to gain experience in the fields of environmental education and natural science. For more details on this opportunity and how to apply, click [here](#). Please feel free to forward this posting to any qualified applicants you think may be interested!



IMPORTANT: PLEASE FILL OUT YOUR VOLUNTEER WAIVER!

If you plan on being an active 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
- 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!

UPCOMING VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

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 if you're willing to lend a hand.



MAPLE SUGARING VOLUNTEERS

Throughout March

The sap will probably start to run within the coming week or two, so we're putting out a call for volunteers to participate in our maple sugaring program!

Volunteers will prep equipment, tap trees, collect sap, split wood, and run the maple syrup evaporator to make maple syrup. Volunteers may also provide demonstrations to the public during events (like Maplefest, set for Sat, March 19th from 11:00 am - 3:00 pm) and may assist in clean-up and storage of equipment at the end of the season. Email James at

james@grassriver.org if you're interested!

VERNAL POOL MONITORS

Late March - Mid May

Vernal pools are ephemeral wetlands that fill with water in the spring and are critical breeding habitat for many rare animals like fairy shrimp and spotted salamanders. Vernal Pool Monitors work in small teams to collect physical and biological data at GRNA's vernal pools three times

throughout the year: twice in the spring and then once in the late summer/fall to verify pool drying. The data is used to help GRNA protect these important habitats. No previous experience is necessary; a full three-part virtual training is provided by the **Michigan Vernal Pool Patrol**. You can find more details and register [here](#). An in-person follow-up training will be provided at GRNA. Contact Emily at emily@grassriver.org if you're interested.



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. 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.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: MIKE FOLEY

This month, we're putting the spotlight on GRNA volunteer Mike Foley. Mike has been a dedicated Conservation Steward for the last few years, helping out with our various citizen science projects, including stream monitoring, vernal pool monitoring, and occasionally parcel monitoring. With a giving heart, a sharp scientist's mind, and an equally sharp sense of humor, we recently caught up with him to hear about his experiences at GRNA over the years:

What inspires you to volunteer for GRNA?

The people, the place, the science, and the importance of GRNA to the clean water our community depends on. My daughter, Kyla, worked as an intern at GRNA in 2019, and she brought me out for my first visit. I was immediately struck by the beauty of the place, and when Kyla mentioned there was a need for volunteers, I was keen to find an area where I could contribute. Having recently retired and having met James and Emily at some of the NMC courses they teach, I felt inspired to help with stream and vernal pool monitoring efforts.

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

Where and how to look for salamanders. I am on the hunt to find fairy shrimp and spotted salamanders in one of the vernal pools at GRNA, so stay tuned!



What do you wish more people knew about GRNA?

I wish more people knew what a rich environment the wetlands and upland forests provide for wildlife,

how important preserving these lands are for the continued wellbeing of everyone living near Grand Traverse Bay, and the opportunity on their doorstep for four season enjoyment of nature at its finest. I also want them to know that places like this can't exist without the generosity of supporters who donate their time, energy, and money.

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

I actually spend most of my spare time volunteering at several other organizations: Inland Seas, The Watershed Center, Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy, Grand Traverse Conservation District, and Safe Harbor. When not doing volunteer work, I enjoy travel, hiking, biking, skiing, and reading. And then there is always the list of chores at home...

Any fun facts about you that you want to tell us about?

I recently finished my Northern Naturalist certification through NMC Extended Education. I have two daughters who are both studying in the environmental science and education fields. My wife and I are both geologists, but fortunately I got the opportunity to retire early and pursue my passion for the natural world and community science.





All photos in this section were taken by Rick Kane.

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



Copyright © 2021 Grass River Natural Area, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

PO Box 231

Bellaire, MI 49615

Natural area address:

6500 Alden Highway, Bellaire MI 49615

Want to change how you receive these emails?
You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

