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Dear GRNA volunteers,

The magic of springtime has arrived in the natural area! Just last week, I was strolling along the boardwalks when I heard a familiar sound in the distance. It took me a while to place it, but I soon recognized the prehistoric rattling call of a sandhill crane. Peering up through the dense cedar branches, I spotted the bird high up against the clouds, its smoke-colored wings transformed to gold by the late afternoon sun: a gilded moment of stillness shepherding in the new season.

And with this new season comes an abundance of ways to lend a hand at GRNA. From stream monitoring to stewardship day, spring is a busy time for volunteering! Also, if you're looking to strengthen your volunteering skills, be sure to check out our upcoming learning opportunities.

Happy springtime, all, 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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**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!



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Now that the busy season is almost 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 wavier:

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



### **APRIL BIRDING HIKE**

**Tues, April 19 from 10:00 am to 11:30 am**

Once a month, GRNA staff go on a hike to explore other natural areas in the region. For our April hike, we're opening it up to our volunteers too! Join us for a leisurely walk along the trails at Sand Lakes Quiet Area, where we'll be brushing up on our bird identification skills as many of our feathered friends start to return from their wintering grounds. No previous birding experience is necessary - we will all be learning from each other! Bring binoculars, or borrow a pair from GRNA. Email Emily at [emily@grassriver.org](mailto:emily@grassriver.org) to sign up.

### **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

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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.

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## 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.



### 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).

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## **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: STEVE SPRINGS DORF**

This month, we're putting the spotlight on GRNA's Board Chair Steve Springsdorf. Steve has been a member of the Board since early 2019, following his retirement from a career with the YMCA. Steve's level head and decades of experience in organizational leadership made him a natural choice for Board Chair, a position he assumed in January. We recently caught up with him to hear about his time at GRNA over the past few years:

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

After retiring from a career with the YMCA and moving back to Antrim County, I wanted to find a way I could support my community. I was somewhat familiar with GRNA from my days working with the YMCA Hayo-Went-Ha Camps in the early 2000s; when an opening occurred on the board, I thought my background in outdoor education and nonprofit management would be a good fit.

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

I am impressed by the level and broad range of support from across the county, the state, and the country that GRNA benefits from. We have a dedicated group of volunteers made up of both full-time and seasonal residents who understand the value of GRNA to our regional conservation and educational efforts. As a visitor, you might not realize this level of support as you experience the beauty and peacefulness of the area.



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

Most people do not know about the level of expertise our staff has as naturalists, educators, and conservationists. The GRNA team is dedicated to educating all members of the public about our natural environment and those we share it with, to serving as a regional resource for the work of protecting our valuable water resources, and to preserving the diverse county-owned property along the Grass River for future generations. So next time you visit GRNA, know there is a well-qualified team making this program a gem in the natural resources of Antrim County and our state.

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

My wife, Judy, and I enjoy playing golf at A-Ga-Ming in the summer and in Gulf Shores in the winter. I also like pontooning on Torch Lake and spending time with my grandson and family.



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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