

Thornapple River SAD Committee

2023 Year End Update

Safety & Navigational Marking Project

The Thornapple River SAD Committee kicked off 2023 with the creation of an RFP to select a contractor to aid in developing and implementing a Safety & Navigational Marking Plan for the SAD section of the Thornapple River. Viking Marine Construction won the bid and took lead on obtaining permits to mark hazards on the river. Permitting was subcontracted to Peterson Vandenburg. Marking of objects/the channel will primarily be between the I-96/M-6 bridges and the CSX railroad bridge. This project is currently awaiting state approval from EGLE and will likely move forward in the next one to two years, depending on how long it takes for permit approval and availability of a contractor to place the navigational markers. The permit will be open for 5 years once approved. More markers were requested than will be placed as it will be easier for the committee to make modifications to the placement as necessary, without requiring additional permits. The committee intends to limit the number of markers so site lines to the water remain scenic. The locations of markers requested in the permit are included in the appendix of this report.

In preparation for the permitting process, Viking Marine Construction surveyed river depths and provided the Township with both the raw data and professional mapping of the SAD portion of the river. While this information was obtained for permitting, the committee hopes to use it for other SAD related tasks in the future, such as updating the river map.

Aquatic Vegetation Control & Water Testing

This year marked the second successful season of weed treatments and water quality testing of the river by PLM Lake & Land Management Corp. Water Quality results, including tests for E. coli, conductivity, total dissolved solids, pH, alkalinity, total phosphorus, nitrates, and chlorophyll are included in the appendix. The 2023 milfoil harvest, the cutting and removal of the exotic and highly invasive species, Eurasian watermilfoil, went much more smoothly than the 2022 harvest. In 2022, large quantities of weeds floating down stream. The committee recommended a change to PLM's harvesting process and that appears to have greatly reduced the amount of weeds floating downstream. While both the committee and Township received complaints related to this in 2022, neither received negative feedback from residents related to the harvesting of weeds in 2023.

Fewer acres of the river were weed treated in 2023 than in previous years, since fewer areas of invasive species were present; this suggests that the weed treatments are working. The

committee hopes this trend continues, but are ready to act if new problems arise. In fall of 2023, there was an extensive algae bloom in Ada Township and, while Cascade Township has not experienced anything similar, the situation is being closely monitored.

SAD Funds

The SAD committee received an unexpected and welcome visit at its September meeting from Supervisor Lesperance and Treasurer Korstange. They explained the process in which funds are collected, processed, and set aside in a SAD. They also answered questions and assured the committee that they would have accurate financial information moving forward. The committee was confident in their financial outlook after the meeting.

Floating Debris Relocation

During the fall of 2023, Larry's Tree Service was contracted to their barge to relocate several large floating trees and logs that the spring rains washed into the navigable waterway. These objects were successfully removed from the channel and securely laid at the edge of the river to provide bank stabilization in designated areas. Moving these objects has made for a much safer environment as these objects would frequently drift with the wind, many floating even with the water's surface, making them hard to spot in certain conditions.

In the first part of 2024, the committee intends to create a multi-year plan.

The committee appreciates the boards continued support of their efforts to improve and protect the quality of the Thornapple River.