



PROJECT SYNOPSIS

Grantee Organization: Huron Pines

Grant Amount: \$59,684

Time Frame: 7-1-2012—6-30-2013

Focus Area: EHSFP Habitat Protection and Restoration

Total Project Cost: \$399,000

WATERSHED BENEFITS

- **Reducing sediment pollution** Reducing the amount of sand that enters the river will create more natural stream conditions for aquatic wildlife
- **Improving fish passage** A number of fish species, such as brook trout and steelhead, will be able to freely move.
- Reconnect 18 miles in the Black River Watershed
- Reduce over 60 tons of sediment/year from entering the river

PROJECT TEAM

- Alcona County Road Commission—Jesse Campbell
- Huron Engineering—Becky Rivard
- U.S. Forest Service—Bob Stuber
- U.S Fish & Wildlife Service—Andrea Ania

PROJECT CONTACT

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PROJECT FUNDERS

- U.S. Forest Service-American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service-Great Lakes Basin Fish Habitat Partnership
- Great Lakes Fishery Trust
- Alcona County Road Commission
- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service-Fish Passage Program
- Haynes Township
- Great Lakes Fish and Wildlife Restoration Act
- Michigan Fly Fishing Club

COASTAL LAKE HURON TRIBUTARY RESTORATION

The Black River/Sucker Creek road stream crossing had been identified as the highest priority of concern in the Black River watershed which drains directly to Lake Huron in Alcona County. The twin perched culverts were acting as an aquatic organism barrier while also disrupting the natural sediment and woody material movement and acting as “pinch point” in the river system. To compound the problem the road approaches were contributing an excessive amount of sediment to the river. The project was completed by replacing the existing crossing with a 54 foot span timber bridge and improving the roadway to reduce sediment entering the stream. These management practices reconnected 18 river miles and reduced sediment by over 60 ton/year.

This project was coordinated by Huron Pines who works to conserve the forests, lakes and streams of Northeast Michigan. This is accomplished by bringing partners together to take a hands-on approach to conservation problems. Our vision is that through active leadership and coordination of conservation projects, we make the region a better place to live, work and enjoy.

Below: Black River/Sucker Creek Road crossing. Notice the perched culverts, plunge pool and steep approach.



COASTAL LAKE HURON TRIBUTARY RESTORATION

CONTEXT

In 2007, Huron Pines worked with the Alcona-Black River Watershed Advisory Council to conduct a road/stream crossing inventory for the Black River watershed. Thirty nine sites were inventoried and ranked based on the estimated amount of sediment entering the river and the aquatic organism barriers that some sites exhibited. Of those, the Black River/Sucker Creek Road site ranked as one of the highest priority crossings for improvement not only within the watershed, but in Alcona County. The Black River is known for its coaster brook trout and steelhead runs making it an ideal candidate for resource improvement projects.



RESULTS

The existing site had undersized twin perched culverts that act as a jumping and velocity barrier for aquatic organisms. The steep gravel approaches literally wash tons of sediment into the river every year. During high rain events the river flows over the road compounding the negative environmental impacts and becomes a safety hazard for vehicle traffic. In November 2012, the old culverts were removed and a 32 foot wide by 54 foot long timber bridge was installed. For the first time in over 50 years the Black River was flowing uninhibited at this site. After the bridge was installed the road was redone by hardening the surface and resloping the ditches to reduce the amount of sediment entering the river.

The habitat benefits of opening the river is truly significant. The Black River is one of the few river systems in Northern Lake Huron that does not have a large dam near the mouth of the river. It receives a significant spawning run of steelhead, salmon and coaster brook trout and removing the road/crossing barrier opens up nearly 18 miles for migrating fish. It also provides more habitat used for foraging and nursery/rearing grounds for juvenile fish. Improvements to the road eliminates more than 60 tons sediment/year from entering the river. In addition to the habitat benefits, being able to complete a large-scale restoration project such as this one in an economically depressed county is a very beneficial outcome. Because the original crossing washed out frequently this created maintenance issues for the road commission and safety concerns for those travelling. The new crossing has greatly improved both transportation safety and will result in reduced maintenance costs. As a result of this project, 3 additional priority sites in the Black River watershed are scheduled for improvement in 2014 and 2015.

RESOURCES

A project summary is available on the Huron Pines [website](#), which outlines in greater detail the project scope and results. The installation of the timber bridge was also deemed as a [Great Lakes Restoration Success Story](#) by the Healing Our Waters Coalition. In October, staff will participate in a 2-day public tour of Alcona County and the Black River/Sucker Creek road crossing replacement is a featured stop.

