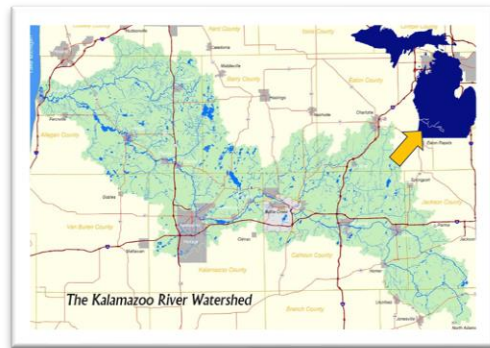


Kalamazoo River Watershed Council Activities Report for Fiscal Year 2024

Dear Partners and Stakeholders,

I am pleased to provide this summary of our activities across major project categories at the Kalamazoo River Watershed Council (KRWC). Below is a summary of the key initiatives that have driven our mission forward over the past year, showcasing our commitment to environmental restoration, community engagement, and organizational growth related to the Kalamazoo River and its watershed. The Kalamazoo River watershed includes over 2000+ square miles of land in southern and southwest Michigan where water flows into the Kalamazoo River and ultimately to the southeast coast of Lake Michigan at Saugatuck/Douglas.

As a 501c3 nonprofit formed in 1993 to be the Public Advisory Council of the Kalamazoo River Area of Concern, our mission is to restore and protect the health of the Kalamazoo River, its tributaries, and its watershed by collaborating with the community, government agencies, local officials, and businesses. This is in some ways an aspirational mission, bigger than we are currently, and representing tremendous potential for engagement throughout this large watershed for the benefit of our unique, irreplaceable, resilient Kalamazoo River and all its communities. These communities include Albion, Marshall, Battle Creek, Kalamazoo, Plainwell, Otsego, Allegan, Douglas, and Saugatuck, as well as all the other communities located within the watershed.



The largest portion of our funding comes from government grants; however, private donations from individuals and businesses who are aligned with our mission are also essential to our success. We are especially grateful for this year's Watershed Benefactors, including Bell's Brewery, Stryker, and Georgia Pacific. This report highlights some of the important work and related accomplishments of the recently completed fiscal year, between October 1, 2023 to September 30, 2024. It is our privilege to provide this report to our past, current, and future

supporters. As you read it, we encourage you to consider how you can help us grow our capacity as an organization to implement our mission well throughout all reaches of this important Michigan watershed.

1. AOC Public Advisory Council (PAC) Grant

Our role as the Kalamazoo River Area of Concern (AOC) Public Advisory Council (PAC) has been central to our organization since 1993 and to efforts focused on restoring the Kalamazoo River from the negative impacts of aging dams and contamination of the river environment with Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCBs). Funded by a grant from the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes,

and Energy (EGLE), we engage with all parties involved in restoring the river from these impacts to provide important public access to the decisions and progress that are leading toward a cleaner, healthier Kalamazoo River. Over the past year, we have:



- Led outreach efforts through community events, river cleanups, and educational paddle trips, engaging the public and raising awareness about ongoing restoration efforts.
- Monitored environmental conditions and improvement efforts, focusing on fish consumption advisories and sediment remediation, ensuring that the community is informed about health risks and river restoration progress.
- Worked on several initiatives to improve the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) aspects of our mission, including through participation in the

Michigan State Public Advisory Council DEI subcommittee. Our goal is to ensure that our activities are inclusive and engage underrepresented communities.

- Collaborated with the many stakeholders involved in restoring the Kalamazoo River, including local businesses, government agencies, and environmental groups, to provide input and to communicate progress to our watershed's communities and beyond.
- Advanced the creation of a short documentary film by a local professional filmmaker about the restoration and bright future of the Kalamazoo River.



2. Kalamazoo River Youth Experience (KRYE) Program

Through a grant from EGLE, and supplemented with private funding, we worked with a number of key partner organizations to develop our Kalamazoo River Youth Experience (KRYE) program. This program has become the cornerstone of our efforts to better connect disadvantaged youth to the

lifelong benefits of engagement with a healthy Kalamazoo River. Key activities included:



- Organizing paddle trips for youth groups, including El Concilio, Open Roads, STREET, Douglass Community Association, and Escape Ministries, allowing young people to experience the Kalamazoo River in a safe, comfortable setting while learning about environmental conservation.
- Hosting educational sessions to provide hands-on learning about water quality, pollution, and the significance of the Kalamazoo River ecosystem.
- Expanding our reach through partnerships with community organizations, ensuring diverse

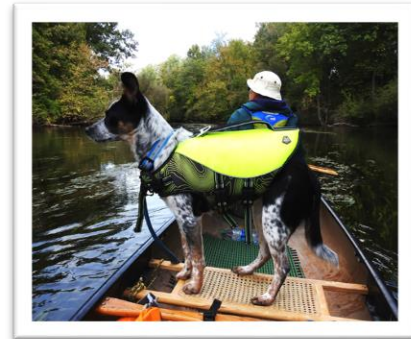
participation, and developing new educational materials like a children's book to further environmental learning for younger audiences.

- Securing private funding, including support from Stryker, which has enabled us to sustain and expand the program for future youth involvement.

3. TMDL Administration

The Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Administration project continues to support our efforts to monitor and reduce nonpoint source pollution levels in the river, including phosphorus and sediment. Major activities include:

- Coordinating quarterly meetings with stakeholders to review water quality data, ensure compliance with TMDL agreements, and discuss pollution reduction strategies.
- Planning and executing the Kano the Kazoo (KtK) program, which includes paddle trips and public engagement activities that promote awareness about water quality issues while offering opportunities for community involvement.
- Managing financial reporting and contract compliance, ensuring that all TMDL-related activities are well-documented and meet relevant requirements.



4. Eat Safe Fish/River Walker Grant

Our Eat Safe Fish program implementation efforts, carried out through a grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS), continue to provide critical information to the community about safe fish consumption practices. Activities in FY2024 included:

- Conducting outreach and educational campaigns about fish consumption advisories, particularly related to PCBs in the river. These efforts help ensure that vulnerable populations are informed about health risks and can make safe choices when fishing in the area.
- Collaborating with MDHHS to support the River Walker program, coordinating the efforts of two seasonal part-time workers who spent May through October visiting parks and popular fishing locations along 80 miles of river to provide fish consumption information to anglers.



5. Forest to MI Faucet (FTMF) Grant

The Forest to MI Faucet program, funded through the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, serves to increase public awareness of the value of healthy forests to the protection of drinking water for residents in the Kalamazoo River watershed. Our recent activities include:

- Collaborating with the City of Kalamazoo and Battle Creek on urban forestry projects that help protect drinking water sources.



- Participating in educational outreach activities, including the Battle Creek area Children's Water Festival, where we helped promote the connection between healthy forests and clean water by adding key messages to a locally-produced board game designed for schoolchildren and community members.

6. Responding to New Opportunities, Concerns, and Funding Initiatives

Addressing the many new inquiries that we receive from people who care about the Kalamazoo River, as well as the new concerns not covered by existing grants, is also critical to our mission. This includes developing new opportunities to engage teachers and students in learning about the freshwater resources in our watershed, and assisting with new concerns about river water quality in the face of developmental pressures. Examples of key activities include:

- Participating in multiple discussions related to the development of the Blue Oval Battery Park in Marshall, in which hundreds of acres of land adjacent to the Kalamazoo River are being developed into an electric vehicle battery manufacturing facility. The KRWC Executive Director and members of the KRWC board have been actively engaged with local government officials, Ford employees, and others in an effort to ensure that development proceeds with minimal potential for harm to the river.
- Providing support to address the Morrow Dam STS sediment release catastrophe, resulting in new legislation signed by Governor Whitmer in July to give Michigan EGLE authority to prevent similar disasters in the future.
- Launching a new initiative with the help of private funding to monitor the accumulation of trash and debris along the Kalamazoo River and its tributaries and pursue new approaches to reduce trash inputs.



- Participating in Consumers Energy's Calkins Dam stakeholder meetings related to possible sale/removal of dam and subsequent impacts on Lake Allegan.
- Joining other partners in opportunities for student and teacher outreach, including a Kalamazoo Public Schools program for rising 9th graders.
- Tracking recent Graphic Packaging and Pfizer wastewater and chemical spills, obtaining information regarding the degree of potential impact to the river environment.

- Working to secure future grant funding by developing and submitting applications such as the Michigan Environmental Justice Impact Grant to support the expansion of the Kalamazoo River Youth Experience program to other communities in the Kalamazoo River watershed.
- Providing numerous letters of support for partners that are seeking grant funding to conduct important projects such as the Battle Creek Unlimited Concrete Channel Removal Project and the Swan Lake Water Quality Association's efforts to combat harmful algal blooms. These support letters, requested by our many active partner organizations, help secure the funding to restore, protect and engage people with our special Southwest Michigan water resources.



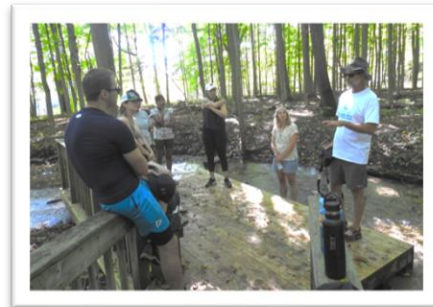
Each of these examples is significant, and demonstrate how people reach out to the KRWC for help with a wide range of river-related concerns. Often, these new requests are not covered by existing grants that commonly address specific objectives related to known concerns. Our ability to address these new challenges and opportunities depends on general support for the implementation of our mission to cover time, travel costs, and other unanticipated expenses.

7. Administration

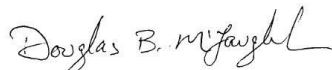
Our administrative efforts are the foundation that supports all of our projects. In FY2024, we have:

- Addressed financial management and reporting needs, including the successful completion of our annual Form 990, regular payroll processing, and preparing monthly financial reports for the KRWC Board.
- Built new partnerships, including obtaining new sources of private funding that are critical in supporting our mission.
- Supported internal growth, including the hiring of the KRWC's first paid Community Outreach and Event Coordinator, and engaging our Board in strategic planning and fundraising efforts.

This year has been one of significant progress and growth for the KRWC, with each of the topic areas described above contributing to our work to help restore the Kalamazoo River and engaging the community in the enjoyment, learning, and stewardship of the river. I am very grateful for the ongoing support of our partners, stakeholders, and community members as we continue this important work together.



Sincerely,



Douglas McLaughlin
Executive Director
Kalamazoo River Watershed Council