

Readers' voice

Dear community,

Ever wonder what it would be like to paddle down river from Paw Paw all the way to Benton Harbor? Two Rivers Coalition board member, Kevin Haight, plans to do just that. Kevin has, in fact, already begun the epic 66 river miles journey and his story will be told at www.TwoRiversCoalition.org as it unfolds.

Please read his message below and then follow the links to see the wonders of the river via maps

and photos and to read of Kevin's observations along the way. The web site will allow you to comment, offer advice or pose questions. Check it out and give Kevin all the support you can. Regular updates on the project will be provided.

Dave Foerster, President
Two Rivers Coalition Inc.

Greetings,

Like all of you, I was shocked and saddened by the environmental devastation caused by the massive oil leak

over the past several months in the Gulf of Mexico. Then, just a few weeks ago, I learned of the oil spill on the Kalamazoo River, and realized that the freshwater treasure we know as the Great Lakes is at risk as well.

I wanted to do something to both raise awareness of local water quality issues and raise funds for local conservation efforts. Therefore, I decided to embark on a paddling trip down the Paw Paw River to

raise funds for Two Rivers Coalition and Freshwater Future as part of the Walk, Paddle and Roll event.

As you may already know, Two Rivers Coalition is a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization involved with conservation, education, and advocacy concerning water quality issues in both the Paw Paw River and Black River watersheds. Freshwater Future does the same thing on a region-wide basis for the entire Great Lakes Basin.

The Paw Paw River and its associated flood plain forest and wetlands is an incredibly important ecosystem extending from the glacial moraines of

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western Kalamazoo County through Van Buren County to Berrien County where it joins the St. Joseph River and then flows into Lake Michigan. The watershed drains 285,557 acres (446 square miles). Over the last 150 years, the watershed has lost approximately 50% of its wetlands which has caused some degradation in water quality.

Although I may be biting off way more than I can chew, I plan to attempt to paddle the entire main branch of the Paw Paw River from the dam at Maple Lake in Paw Paw down the approximately 66 miles of winding river (including count-

less logjams) to its confluence with the St. Joseph River.

Please partner with me in raising awareness of the beauty and importance of the Paw Paw River and the threats that it faces by sponsoring me on-line. You can make a donation by clicking one of the links next to the picture on my page, a link to which is:

www.firstgiving.com/Kevin-Haight

You can pledge an amount based on the river miles I paddle. I expect that it will take me the rest of the summer and fall to paddle the 66 miles of river. As I get to the sections which

are more easily navigable between Hartford and Waterliet, TRC members will be invited to paddle those sections with me.

I will post updates on my progress to the goal at the First Giving web site, as well as to chronicle my journey at the TRC web site, www.TwoRiversCoalition.org and the TRC facebook page.

On behalf of Two Rivers Coalition and Freshwater Future, I thank you in advance for any support you can give. I also urge you to check out the TRC web site with regard to water quality issues and other ways you can become involved.

Best Wishes,
Kevin Haight