

NEW FEDERAL LAW GIVES FAIRER TAX BENEFIT FOR VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENTS

Generous landowners who donate voluntary conservation easements to Grand River partners are inspired by many things: they love the northeast Ohio region, they feel connected to their land, and they wish to leave a legacy for future generations. This inspiration is at the heart of our work to permanently protect valuable natural resources and our beautiful river. But donating a conservation easement is a major financial decision, and the federal income tax deduction that comes with a donation helps make easements possible for landowners in our watershed.

Congress recently passed a new law that enhances the tax benefits of protecting private land for many landowners. The legislation improves the tax incentive for conservation easements by allowing conservation easement donors to:

- Deduct up to 50% of their adjusted gross income in any year (up from 30%);
- Deduct up to 100% of their adjusted gross income if the majority of that income came from farming, ranching or forestry; and
- Continue to take deductions for as long as 15 years (up from 5 years) after the initial deduction.

Congress also passed tighter appraisal standards for such gifts, and stronger penalties for appraisers who violate the standards.

The Land Trust Alliance (LTA) led the effort to get Congress to approve this new law. LTA is a national organization that sets national standards for conservation organizations like ours, provides training and networking opportunities, and represents the land trust community in Washington, DC. Grand River Partners, Inc. has been a member of LTA for years.

Our Representative Steve LaTourette voted for this measure, and has been a strong supporter of conservation in the region. Senators DeWine and Voinovich also supported this important change in the tax law. Our thanks to them for their help in winning this new incentive for conservation donors.

Each day we are touched by the generous and inspired landowners who work with us. The new law will make it easier for others in our community to build on their love of the land and permanently protect the Grand River and its spectacular watershed.

To learn more about these new developments, visit: <http://www.grandriverpartners.org> or www.LTA.org



Grand River Partners, Inc.
On the campus of Lake Erie College
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Painesville OH 44077

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Mission Statement

To preserve the water quality, open space, the natural, recreational, agricultural and scenic resources of the Grand River in Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, Portage, and Trumbull Counties by uniting residents, landowners, businesses, and communities in the stewardship and permanent protection of the Grand River watershed.

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Grand River Partners, Inc.

Preserving the Grand - Leaving a Legacy

Fall 2006

thoughts

from the executive director

From the Wild Grand River Gorge, the river flows into the lake plain adjacent to Lake Erie, and into what used to be the estuary of the Grand River. An estuary is usually defined as an area where a river meets a sea, where the fresh and saltwater meet, and where the water levels are influenced by tides. Where Lake Erie and the Grand River meet, while not the intersection of fresh and saltwater, is an intersection of a river and an inland freshwater sea where water levels are influenced by small tides. The estuary of the Grand River would have had broad wetlands and mudflats.

Estuaries serve as the final filtering grounds before the river water flows out into the Lake, and as nurseries for numerous fish species. Unfortunately, the estuary of the Grand River was destroyed generations ago. Out of nostalgia for something long lost, we at GRPI still call the lower stretch of river from the train trestle near the State Route 84 bridge to Lake Erie the "Estuarine Area". In reality, this is the urbanized portion of the watershed- home to thousands of people, site of important commercial and industrial enterprises, and a recreational resource of vast potential.

With the northeast Ohio economy shifting toward high-technology and service oriented industries, amenities such as the Grand River flowing through the community are increasingly critical to retaining a highly-trained, motivated, healthy workforce. This northernmost reach of the river provides ideal opportunities for people to canoe, fish, watch birds, and enjoy the Grand River.

As time moves forward, tourism, including steelhead fishing, will become a larger portion of our economy in northeast Ohio. A clean, intact Grand River providing well-planned recreational access while also respecting private property rights will be key to this bright future. Grand River Partners, Inc. and our partners are hard at work preserving the river and its quality for you, your children, and future generations who will call the Grand River Watershed home.

To increase our efforts to keep this great river clean, we have recently added two full time staff members and a part time conservation intern, bringing our total to 1 part time and 5 full time professionals devoted to the Grand River. George Warnock, our conservation intern, is currently working towards his degree in Environmental Science at Lake Erie College and will graduate in May of 2007. Mary Jo Curtis of Madison is our new Office Manager and Outreach Coordinator, while Brett Rodstrom of Concord joined our crew as a Land Protection Coordinator. Brett's position was funded through grants from The Cleveland Foundation, The George Gund Foundation, the Ohio Division of Wildlife and the United States Department of Agriculture, with the assistance of the Western Reserve RC&D and The Nature Conservancy. We would all like to thank these partners for their support, and hope you will join us in welcoming Mary Jo, Brett and George to our team.



Here we can see one of the trademarks of the Estuarine Area of the Grand River Watershed...a wide floodplain.

Eddie Dengg

WATERSHED WATCH

We know in life that all good things must come to an end. Our journey along the magnificent Grand River is coming to a close, but not without becoming witness once more to the amazement of the Grand River. It is time to jump back in and get our feet wet as we explore the Estuarine Area of the Grand River.

We begin our float below the Norfolk and Western Railroad trestle, south of Painesville. Here the river maintains the free-flowing characteristics that it posses in the Gorge, however, we now begin to see houses and business sprouting up atop the magnificent shale cliffs. Civilizations of the past realized the great wealth of living near a river, whether for drinking water, transportation, or fertile soils. Today, with our modern technology, the 'need' to live near water has been replaced with 'want'. People want to be close to the water, and the Grand River is absolutely no exception.

The Estuarine Area of the Grand flows directly though the hustle and bustle of the city of Painesville, but this mighty river seems to keep its own pace, meandering on its own freewill. It is in this stretch of the river that we find some of the most pristine in-stream habitat. The river is dotted with pools and miniature rapids, or riffles... an angler's paradise. This section is truly alive...not only with the plentiful wildlife, flora, and fauna but with residents and visitors as well. Access to the river is a key attribute of this stretch of the Grand River. Numerous parks, boat launches, and fishing sites allow for a true connection with the river.

As we float along, we begin to notice that the high shale walls have all but disappeared. Now we are left with a flat, broad plain that neighbors the river. This broad plain is a distinct trait that signifies that the river is soon coming to an end. We paddle on, passing numerous marinas and boat clubs. Our canoe is starting to look more like a toy boat as we pass some of the docks which harness large fishing and sailing boats. There is no question that recreation is the name of the game on this stretch of river.

Monstrous shadows are cast upon the water of the Grand as we move along. Gigantic piles of sand and gravel create the feeling of traveling through a mountain chain. Here at Fairport Harbor, Lake County's largest and most commercially active port the Grand River reaches the end of its hundred mile journey. The river tranquilly meets the lake, pouring the cleanest water into the lake, and sending water that fell on farm fields in Parkman, forests in Rome Township, vineyards in Madison, and rooftops in Painesville on an international journey into and out of Lake Erie and over Niagara Falls. We all live downstream, and what we do on our land in the Grand River Watershed ultimately determines the fate of the river, Lake Erie, and beyond.



Where the river meets the lake...on the left side of the break wall is the Grand River, and on the other is Lake Erie.



These raccoon tracks are a tell tale sign that more than people find this section of the river valuable for its numerous river access points.

Vicki Domonkos

Friends of the Grand

What are the things in life that you are passionate about? It could be what you do to earn a living but for many of us it may be a hobby or outdoor sport we participate in or it may be the organization for which we volunteer our time. For some of us, we are lucky enough to be able to say that our careers provide the passion in our life. I was rereading a book suggested by our Executive Director this past Labor day weekend titled, "Good Dirt - Confessions of a Conservationist" by David Morine. David was in charge of land acquisition for The Nature Conservancy from 1972 to 1987.

Good Dirt is a collection of stories that provide an insight into the business of land acquisition for the purposes of conservation. We often think that passionate means serious and by-the-book. David Morine describes the not so serious moments and the luck that he experienced in his very successful career with The Nature Conservancy. He summarizes it this way in the Introduction: " Any time you undertake a major land deal something is going to go wrong. When that happens, you can do one of two things: You can get upset, or you can laugh. More often than not, we laughed."

He goes on to say, "I believe that a large part of the conservancy's success has been due to the fact that we never took ourselves too seriously. We never let the big issues get us down. ...We attacked the problem of saving significant natural areas one piece at a time."

What I have seen at my short time as a trustee with Grand River Partners, Inc. (GRPI) is a true passion for land conservation and protection of this great natural resource we call the Grand River. Our staff is very passionate and are very effective at what they do. They are focused on saving significant areas one piece at a time but based on a holistic view of the watershed. The trustees are committed to the mission of the organization and to doing the "right things" to achieve the mission and to supporting the staff's professional efforts.

As Chairperson of the "Friends of the Grand" committee I would like to help GRPI develop a group of volunteers that have a passion around the Grand River and protection of this unique natural resource. At the same time, like David Morine, I believe that we shouldn't take ourselves too seriously. For me, passion and enjoyment go hand in hand with hard work and dedication to our mission. Our volunteerism can and should involve enjoyment of the Grand River.

The Friends of the Grand Committee is looking for volunteers that have a passion about the Grand River and are willing to work hard and have fun. If you would like to join our fledgling group, please give the office a call and talk with one of our staff about opportunities to help plan, coordinate and run our events.

Ken Frato, Trustee

Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER 6 - Friends of the Grand, GRPI's volunteer committee, meets at 6:00-7:00 p.m. at the Arabica coffee house in downtown Painesville, to discuss volunteer opportunities and upcoming events. For more information on becoming a member please call Mary Jo at 440.375.7311.

NOVEMBER 13 - Staff from GRPI will speak at the Muskie's, Inc.-Cleveland Chapter #23 monthly meeting at the Perkins Restaurant in Streetsboro. Contact Michael Quigley for more information on Muskie's Inc. at 440.269.2464, or email MFQuigley@Hotmail.com.

DECEMBER 12 - Grand River Partnership meeting 9:00a.m.-Noon, at the Holden building at Lake Erie College.

Keep your eyes open for details to come on the Grand River Hiking Challenge beginning March 2007.

May 22-GRPI's Annual Meeting

June 9-GRPI's Annual River Cleanup

- Our conservation partner of GRPI, the Geauga Park District is celebrating their Bio-Centennial. Experience 200 years of living with wild neighbors at the following events:(all programs held Saturdays at 7p.m. at Big Creek Park, in the Donald W. Meyer Center, Chardon Twp.)
- November 11-Panthers to Passenger Pigeons: Wildlife of Geauga's Wilderness
- December 9-Vittles & Varmints: Wildlife Down on Great Granddad's Farm
- January 13-Stewardship Strategies for Preserving Geauga's Natural Heritage
- January 27-Back from the Brink: Northeast Ohio's Comeback Critters

Always remember to check our website for more news and information-www.grandriverpartners.org.

Grand River Partners, Inc.

Please fill in or make corrections to your contact information below:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

- Add me to the e-mail list to receive periodic updates. Grand River Partners, Inc. does not share its mailing lists.

INDIVIDUAL GIFTS

- \$1000 Guardian of the Grand River \$100 Conservator of the Creeks
 \$500 Steward of the Streams \$_____ or \$50 Member

PLEASE SEND INFORMATION ABOUT:

- Conservation Easements
 Gifts of Land
 Planned Giving

HOBBIES OR INTERESTS

- Agriculture Gardening
 Birding Hiking
 Botany Hunting
 Canoeing Outdoor Education
 Fishing Volunteering

Please fill out this portion and mail to Grand River Partners, Inc. On the campus of Lake Erie College, 391 W Washington St, Painesville OH 44077

GRAND RIVER CURRENTS

THE FLOOD OF 2006

July 28th 2006 is a date that will long be remembered by anyone who lives near the Grand River. The Flood of 2006 reminded us of not only the danger and destructiveness of water, but also of the importance in maintaining open space for reasons other than habitat and water quality. It reminded us that as advanced as we are in our development practices, we still are not able to implement artificial stormwater infrastructures that even closely emulates the effectiveness and efficiency of Mother Nature's system of streams, floodplains, wetlands, and groundwater aquifers. These "natural resources" are often rated on their habitat and aesthetic values and not by their ability to control and clean stormwater and runoff. Too often their potential to both detain and clean water is not realized.

The Grand River itself has an expansive floodplain which by natural design allows flood waters to spill out over the banks letting large storm flows spread out, slow down, and drop out sediment and woody debris. Its headwater tributaries twist and turn to dissipate velocities from flashy runoff using natural features such as logjams, root-wads, and cobbled streambeds. Most importantly, the watershed's vast expanse of wetlands act like a sponge providing immeasurable surface storage for rainwater, while open spaces like forests and croplands help facilitate vital groundwater recharge beneath the soil.

Moving forward, we need to decide what we as a region want for the future. With the advent of modern drinking water and sanitary infrastructures, we no longer need to build or live near rivers and streams. By not bulding near rivers and streams, people and infrastructures can be kept out of harms way while preserving areas we now understand to be critical to natural floodwater storage. Additionally, we owe it to our community to at least explore the idea of reverting existing residential and commercial streamside areas back into natural floodplain areas so they can do their jobs as intended. This will not only protect lives and the enormous costs associated with the inevitable damages of floods, but it can also bring ecotourism and recreational dollars while increasing the property values of surrounding homes and businesses.

Grand River Partners, Inc.'s focus is to preserve critical open space for the benefit of future generations. These benefits materialize in the form of habitat protection, aesthetic intangibles, water quality protection, and water quantity control. With your help, we can preserve these and other critical lands within the watershed and help maintain the aesthetics, habitat, and economic viability of all of the communities in our watershed. We thank you for your continued support.

Brett Rodstrom



Lake SWCD

The Flood of 2006 reminded us of not only the danger and destructiveness of water, but also of the importance in maintaining open space for reasons other than habitat and water quality.

EASEMENT NEWS

This edition of the newsletter concludes Grand River Partners, Inc.'s journey along the Grand River from its humble beginnings just north of Parkman, to its confluence with Lake Erie between the Villages of Grand River and Fairport Harbor. The Estuarine/Urban Project Area begins at the train trestle near State Route 84 crossing with the Grand River and ends in Fairport Harbor and Grand River at the mouth. The Estuarine/Urban Project Area includes the subwatershed of Red Creek which extends to the west just north of Painesville. Red Creek enters the Grand River 0.6 of a mile upstream of the State Route 2 crossing. Incidentally, it is rather difficult to imagine the Grand River gathering enough run-off to flood each side of the State Route 2 bridge as it reaches did several weeks ago.

The Estuarine/Urban Project Area is an important part of the Grand River Watershed and encompasses approximately 13,300 acres of land representing the smallest project area in the watershed. Estuarine/Urban Project Area lies amongst an urban area with the densely populated areas of Painesville, Perry Township, Fairport Harbor, Grand River, and Mentor further to the west. People from these urban areas do not have to travel far to launch their kayaks and canoes, or to try their luck at catching a steelhead or two. The Grand River offers people the chance to get outside and get back to nature. People living in the surrounding area should have opportunities to recreate along this splendid river.

Grand River Partners, Inc. established a very different goal for the Estuarine/Urban Project Area in comparison to the other Project Areas within the watershed. In the other Project Areas, Grand River Partners, Inc.'s intention is to work with private landowners on a voluntary basis

to conserve property and still allow it to be maintained in private hands. However, in this lower stretch of river Grand River Partners, Inc. feels it is important to offer the large number of people living in close proximity to the river, greater access to it. It is Grand River Partners, Inc. primary goal to work with our partners to secure land for public access, giving people greater opportunities to enjoy the river in this urbanized area.



A view of the Grand River from high above. This property is newly owned by Lake Metroparks

In the fall of 2005 Lake Metroparks opened their Grand River Landing Park located near the St. Clair Street bridge. This property gives people the opportunity to launch their canoes, kayaks and small boats on an improved ramp and enjoy fishing the mouth of the Grand River. Grand River Partners, Inc. expects this park to be popular this fall and spring with local fisherman. Over a year ago Grand River Partners, Inc. helped broker an important transaction and linked an owner of a large important parcel with Lake Metroparks. Just recently, we are happy to report, Lake Metroparks closed on the acquisition of the 59 acre property located north of State Route 84, just inside the Painesville City limits. When this property becomes open to the public, it will offer a great opportunity for people to enjoy a beautiful reach of the river. This type of transaction exemplifies the projects Grand River Partners, Inc. intends to manage in the future. We are looking forward to continuing our relationship with our partners to secure additional property in the Estuarine/Urban Project Area.

Chad Knisely

THE WETLAND RESERVE ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM

New Easement Program

In the spring of 2006, Grand River Partners, Inc. through the efforts of the Western Reserve RC&D, was awarded federal dollars for the protection of riparian areas through a new sister program of the popular Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) called the Wetland Reserve Enhancement Program (WREP). The WREP program was established to expand existing WRP easement opportunities to neighbors and adjacent property owners. Typically, the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) assists landowners with WRP easements however, the WREP program allows other conservation organizations such as Grand River Partners, Inc. to take the lead in assisting landowners with the eligibility requirements and application process for these funds.

Being recognized for its water quality and biologic diversity, the Grand River is currently the only watershed in Ohio that these funds have been made available to. The goal of this program is to protect 50,000 linear feet of stream and over 500 acres of riparian buffers.

How it works

This program pays qualifying landowners the appraised easement value of their land for the establishment of conservation easements

in riparian areas within 300 feet of either side of a stream. WREP easements protect the riparian areas in perpetuity, even if the property is sold to another owner by prohibiting development and degradation of natural resources. The advantages of this program are that the landowner receives financial compensation for the easement while still enjoying the benefits of owning the property. The landowner is permitted to maintain trails, hunt, fish, and even selectively cut timber and most importantly does not grant public access to the property. In many cases, these uses are the property owner's primary interest in the first place. WREP easements allow the landowner to enjoy the land as they always have while assuring them that a portion of their property will never be developed. These advantages alone have made the WRP and WREP programs very popular among landowners in recent years throughout the Grand River Watershed and Northeast Ohio.

So far in 2006, Grand River Partners has assisted five landowners with WREP applications for their properties. If you are interested in the WREP program, please contact Land Protection Coordinator Brett Rodstrom at Grand River Partners, Inc., 440-375-7313.

Brett Rodstrom

THE GRAND RIVER WATERSHED



Lake SWCD

The unique geology of the Grand River Gorge provides numerous, picturesque waterfalls like this one found on Talcott Creek.



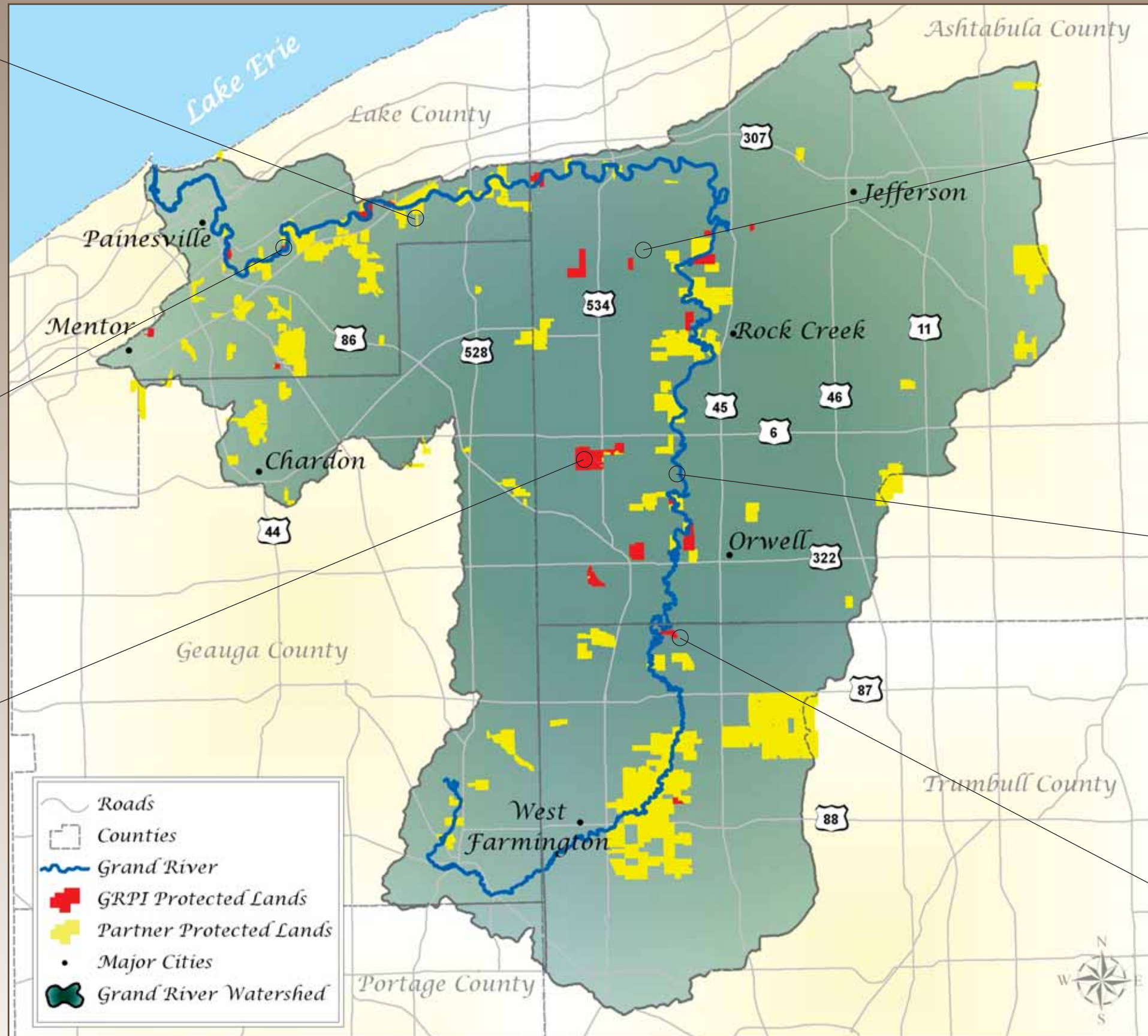
EPA

The portion of the Grand River that flows through the gorge, offers a perfect habitat for many species of fish including this wildly colorful fish, the Rainbow Darter.



ODNR

The snowshoe hare, river otter, and wild turkey have all been reintroduced into the Grand River Watershed. Populations of all three species are rapidly growing due to the unparalleled habitat that the Grand River Watershed offers.



A major boom in the timber industry and conversion of forest into farmland was responsible for reducing Ohio's woodlands to a historic low of only 10% by 1940. Today it is difficult to find giant trees like this Grand River oak, in Ohio.



This great blue heron rookery, or nesting site, is located within the Grand River Lowlands, a high priority conservation area. These large, 3 foot-tall, stork-like birds will use dead standing timber to construct their massive nests over expanses of open water.



The red spotted newt, found throughout the Grand River Watershed, is a colorful specie that requires a pollutant free, mature forest to thrive.