



2021 Port Huron Habitat Site Report

Pine Grove Park and Kiefer Park

Report prepared for: City of Port Huron Projects: Pine Grove Park and Kiefer Park Report prepared by: Friends of the St. Clair River Funding provided by: EGLE Report date: March 28, 2022

Purpose: The Friends of the St. Clair River visits St. Clair River Area of Concern habitat restoration sites annually to measure success and to identify areas of improvement. The City of Port Huron's sites include Pine Grove Park and Kiefer Park. Each site is scored (**Good**, Fair, **Poor**) on five criteria: Vegetation, Habitat, Human Impact, Erosion, and Maintenance. This report includes our observations and recommendations from our site visit in October 2021.



Port Huron – Pine Grove Park restoration project photo from 2016, courtesy M. Foose, EGLE



Port Huron – Kiefer Park restoration project photo from 2016, courtesy M. Foose, EGLE

PINE GROVE PARK Project completion year: 2012 GLRI investment: \$1,200,000 Owner: City of Port Huron Overall score: POOR

One of the first funded projects under the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI), the Port Huron North shoreline project included planting native wildflowers and installing rock along the 300-foot shoreline in addition to cobble placed in the river to create a substrate benefitting fish and aquatic insects. This project addresses the Loss of Fish & Wildlife Habitat beneficial use impairment to the St. Clair River.

Recommendations – Re-establish a no mow zone on the top three to four feet of the slope. Plant a low growing native ground cover in this area to help prevent erosion. Virginia Creeper is a native plant valued by wildlife and is already present on the site. Virginia Creeper can be trained to grow as a large-scale groundcover. Training involves cutting the vines to the ground where they are climbing trees, shrubs or other desirable native species, while allowing it to grow across the ground. Manage Japanese Knotweed in this project by herbicide application by a qualified contractor. Wild grape vine is an aggressive native species and should also be removed from trees and shrubs, and possibly treated with herbicide at the same time as Japanese Knotweed. Installing and repairing erosion control webbing will reduce erosion on the paths.

Observations



VEGETATION – Score: POOR

The street level area is kept mowed as well as the top 3 to 4 feet of the slope to the water's edge. On the steeply sloped portion adjacent to the river, native plants dominate, especially Indian Grass (*Sorghastrum nutans*). Non-native chicory and daisies and native milkweed were also observed. Opportunistic, native wild grape vine (*Vitis* sp.) and Virginia Creeper (*Parthenocissus quinquefolia*) are engulfing most of the trees. On the north end of the site there is a dense patch of invasive Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) which appears to be overwhelming the native trees.



Port Huron – Pine Grove Park Shoreline fish & wildlife habitat Site sketch – management zones Friends of the St. Clair River – www.scriver.org



A view of the site from the south end showing the top of the slope is now bare soil and is eroding rapidly.



Invasive Japanese Knotweed covering trees at the north end of the site. Erosion can be seen in the foreground at top of slope.

HABITAT FEATURES AND WILDLIFE – Score: FAIR

Some shallow water habitat is visible because of lower water levels. The rock wall is also exposed due to lower water levels. Sparrows were present in the trees, but no wildlife was observed in the water. No geese were observed, and some goose droppings were present but not as much as on previous visits.

HUMAN USE IMPACTS – Score: POOR

There are several paths that have been trampled down to the water's edge and erosion is severe in these areas. There is some debris present even though there are 3 trash cans present.

EROSION/WATER LEVEL IMPACTS – Score: POOR

In some areas water is adjacent to the soil bank with no rock interface. Erosion of the upper slope has increased dramatically since last year. The plastic grid in place to prevent erosion is exposed and is breaking down.

MAINTENANCE ISSUES – Score: FAIR

Signage needs updating due to minor water damage. A tree has been cut down with only the stump remaining. Mowing of the grass on the upper 3 to 4 feet of the slope is increasing erosion on upland portion of the site.

KIEFER PARK Project completion year: 2014 GLRI investment: \$500,000 Owner: City of Port Huron Overall score: FAIR

Invasive species along the streambank were treated and removed, native shrubs and trees were planted and large whole trees were anchored into the streambank providing cover for young fish. This project addresses the Loss of Fish & Wildlife Habitat beneficial use impairment to the St. Clair River.

Recommendations – There is a need to reinforce eroded areas especially at the north end. Invasive species control would also be helpful to support project intent of providing wildlife habitat.



North end of the site showing the erosion undercutting the concrete erosion mat.



South end of the site with grassy slope, concrete barrier and debris hanging from the tree.

VEGETATION – Score: FAIR

Pear, maple and hickory trees planted in the level grassy area appear to be thriving and no additional string trimmer damage was observed. Several stands of native Staghorn Sumac (*Rhus typhina*) and crabapples were observed on the slope. Invasive species observed included Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Tree of Heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*). Non-native chicory and Queen Anne's Lace (*Daucus carota*) were also observed.

HABITAT FEATURES AND WILDLIFE – Score: FAIR

The submerged shallow water habitat was not visible on the north end, the log with roots is not present but a similar log is wedged into the bank downstream. The only wildlife present was a flock of small birds and some robins in the trees and shrubbery on the slope. Some shallow water habitat, most submerged rock, was visible on the south end. A large amount of goose droppings were observed in the grassy area and along the sidewalk.

HUMAN USE IMPACTS – Score: POOR

Debris was observed on the ground, including food wrappers, plastic bottles etc. even though garbage cans are present. Woody debris and ropes have been suspended from a tree at the south end.

EROSION/HIGH WATER IMPACTS – Score: POOR

There is severe erosion on the north end of the slope. The concrete erosion control structure has been undermined near the water's edge. There has been severe erosion all along the bank/water interface. There is some erosion on the south end, but the grassy slope and concrete barrier has helped to reduce that.

MAINTENANCE ISSUES – Score: FAIR

Grass is mowed to within a few feet of the slope but not over the edge. The grass around the trees is not trimmed which has protected them from string trimmer damage. Signage is in good shape.