January 7, 2022

The Watershed Center
GRAND TRAVERSE BAY
13170 S. West Bay Shore Dr, Ste 102
Traverse City, MI 49684
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www.gtbay.org

Steve Patmore
Leelanau Township
119 E Nagonaba Street
Northport, MI 49670

Sara Kopriva
Beckett & Raeder
148 E. Front Street, Suite 207
Traverse City, MI 49684

Dear Mr. Patmore and Ms. Kopriva,

I am writing regarding the draft Master Plan dated 12.03.21 that was developed by Beckett & Raeder and shared with the Planning Commission at the December 9, 2021, meeting. The Watershed Center advocates for clean water in Grand Traverse Bay and works to preserve and protect its watershed. We are pleased to know that the township is contracting with Beckett & Raeder to update your Master Plan as they are leaders in environmental planning in the region. As water resource professionals with a deep understanding of the township's waters, we offer you some general thoughts and suggested edits as you continue to refine this plan.

1) **Watershed Description in the Natural Features Chapter**
We appreciate the reference to the 12-digit Hydrologic Unit Code (HUC) in the Natural Features Chapter; the draft Master Plan refers to this watershed as the "Belangers Creek subwatershed." To ensure understanding that the "Belangers Creek subwatershed" includes several other streams besides Belangers Creek that drain to the bay, we suggest further describing this subwatershed. We suggest the addition of the following text on page 2 of the draft Natural Features chapter:

> While the HUC 12 watersheds are named after the largest stream system within their delineated boundary, they contain many smaller tributaries as watersheds are nested. Within the Belangers Creek subwatershed are many smaller tributaries that drain directly to Grand Traverse Bay; the largest include Weaver, Ennis, and Northport creeks, which are all designated as coldwater trout streams by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Page 2 of the draft Natural Features chapter references the 2005 Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Protection Plan. In 2021, The Watershed Center revised this plan focusing on the coastal communities of Grand Traverse Bay. We encourage Beckett & Raeder to update the draft Master Plan with the newer version of the watershed plan as threats and goals have changed within the last two decades.

We suggest the following edits to the right column of the table on page 2 of the draft Natural Features chapter.

Coastal Grand Traverse Bay Watershed Plan
Belangers Creek
Sediment, nutrient loading, altered hydrology, loss of habitat, thermal pollution, toxic substances, invasive species, pathogens
Recreation, aesthetics, ecosystem preservation
Protect the integrity of ecosystems; protect and improve water quality; establish and promote BMPs; encourage and support local economy with diverse recreational and commercial opportunities; develop and maintain effective watershed protection education and outreach; preserve the distinctive character, cultural heritage, and aesthetic qualities of watershed; integrate climate-resilient practices and efforts

2. Water Quality in the Natural Features Chapter

On Page 3 of the draft Natural Features chapter, there is reference to the 2018 Integrated [Assessment] Report (also known as the State's Impaired Waters List), which is a biennial report on the quality of the state's water resources as required by the federal Clean Water Act. The table described as "Designated Use Assessment by Subwatershed" refers to the 2018 edition; the 2020 Integrated Report is now available at www.michigan.gov. One can see from the 2020 Integrated Report that the "Belangers Creek – Frontal Grand Traverse Bay watershed" contains Northport Creek, which is impaired due to elevated levels of *E. coli* bacteria and therefore is not meeting the total body contact designated use. Further, it is important to acknowledge that not all streams and creeks within the "Belangers Creek – Frontal Grand Traverse Bay Watershed" were assessed for all designated uses.

3. Wetlands in the Natural Features Chapter

As we see from data shared in this section of the draft Natural Features chapter, wetlands are disappearing throughout the township. The draft Master Plan states that the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE)

Leelanau Forum - P.O. Box 25 - Northport, MI - 49670

LEELANAU FORUM

To: Northport Village Council and Planning Commission
Leelanau Township Board and Planning Commission

March 15, 2021

Subject: Proposal to acquire outside funding for Restoration of Northport Creek
Federal grants are available to "reconnect broken streams and improve fish habitat"

For a number of years there has been an initiative in Michigan and across the Nation to remove impoundments on streams and rivers for the purpose of restoring those impaired natural resources. It is not a taking but a "giving back" of something that was severely damaged in the past.

We present the following **facts** for your consideration and support:

1. Brook trout are designated as Michigan's state fish (see enclosed brook trout photo)
2. Northport Creek is a broken stream ("a Michigan trout stream in peril" Tom Kelly)
3. Northport Creek is no longer a free flowing stream - The impoundment does not allow full passage for native trout to navigate upstream to spawn – Northport Creek is fragmented in 4 sections
4. The pond/impoundment was hastily built in 1855 as a "log pond" for holding and washing logs The pond serves no practical or economic benefit to the community
5. Cold creek water becomes several degrees warmer while being held in the pond
6. Unhealthy elevated levels of E.coli were reported in the creek below the impoundment by the MDEQ/EGLE in 2017
7. The pond becomes congested with a bio-mass of weeds and algae annually (see enclosed pond pic)
8. The impoundment causes natural stream sediment to be trapped and accumulate in the pond
9. A stream, under natural conditions, transports mineral sediments, organic matter/leaf litter and nutrients downstream - The pond interrupts the natural process and sediment drops to the bottom
10. Northport Creek is *"moderately to severely impaired and the fish community poor."* (See Northport Creek Water Quality and Habitat Investigation Study funded by the Adams Chapter of TU) (Spearheaded by Tom Kelly, founder and director of Inland Seas Education Association)
11. The fish provided by the Sportsman's Club are a hybrid rainbow that does not reproduce or thrive in the creek – If not caught, they die within a few months because there is not the required food or habitat to sustain such a fish - The stocked hybrid rainbows also eat brook trout fingerlings
12. MDNR has not stocked Northport Creek with brook trout since 1952 and does *not* intend to stock the creek while the creek remains in its impaired condition
13. The status of Northport Creek as a "Designated Coldwater Trout Stream" is in question (see #12)
14. The Village of Northport spent $65,000 of taxpayer's money to once again dredge the pond in 2010. Dredging does nothing to improve or protect the natural resource - $65,000 could be put to a much wiser use such as matching grant funding - The pond is presently degraded with sediment
15. The impoundment "dam" is a *boarded barrier* that allows for easy draw-down of pond water
16. "The current concrete structure of the mill pond dam/boarded barrier is deteriorating considerably" Now is the time to consider all *options* before "$35,000" is spent on eng. *studies* for replacement.
17. Leelanau Conservancy holds 1600ft. of the Northport Creek pathway under their guardianship in the 10 acre Hunt Conservation Easement within the village of Northport (see enclosure / Hunt)

18. ***"The federal government is funding an effort to reconnect broken streams and improve fish habitat"*** in Leelanau County. (see enclosure Federal grant article) Application for funding can be made through the Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians, *Leelanau Conservancy*, Conservation Resource Alliance and others.

Our community boasts about this beautiful place and recognizes that protecting natural resources is paramount. Northport Creek should be a jewel for our community to be proud of. Local kids could catch a native trout seasonally in a free flowing creek, and not a stocked hybrid fish in a stagnant pond one day a year. (see enclosure: Restoration of Kids Creek)

Request: Please form a committee to study this special and most important issue and hold a public meeting (Q&A) for citizens to present questions to stream restoration *experts*. We would like to participate with your committee and assist with inviting experts to meetings for discussion. Seize what is a golden opportunity to restore Northport Creek to its once natural, free flowing state.

Organizations and State Departments that support "reconnecting broken streams" with Federal funds:

1. Leelanau Conservancy
2. Grand Traverse Band of Ottawa and Chippewa Indians (GTB)
3. Conservation Resource Alliance (CRA)
4. Grand Traverse Regional Land Conservancy
5. Watershed Center Grand Traverse Bay
6. Grand Traverse Conservation District
7. Leelanau Clean Water
8. Inland Seas Education Association
9. Adams Chapter of Trout Unlimited (TU)
10. FLOW / For Love of Water non-profit
11. American Rivers
12. Michigan Department of Natural Resources / MDNR
13. EGLE / The Michigan Department of **E**nvironment, **G**reat **L**akes and **E**nergy

We appreciate your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

David Brigham

David Brigham President, Leelanau Forum, a non-profit organization ph. 231 386-5785

Enclosures: Federal grant to help fish, article – Picture of Northport Creek in upper reach
Leelanau Conservancy Hunt Conservation Easement on Northport Creek, story
Pond/impoundment pictures of bio-mass/algae - Restoration of Kids Creek

cc. Leelanau Conservancy, Watershed Center GTBay, CRA, G.T. Band, Leelanau Clean Water, TU, MDNR, EGLE / The Michigan Dept. of **E**nvironment, **G**reat **L**akes and **E**nergy

* NORTHPORT CREEK POND / IMPOUNDMENT SEPTEMBER 2020 *