

6.3 Today Summary

The River has reached its two highest levels ever recorded in 2018 (20.67 feet) and 2013 (21.85 ft.)

Manmade Changes to the River

- Currently, there are 228 registered dams throughout the entire Grand River basin.
- The Sixth Street Dam, which was originally used to divert impounded water to canals to the east and west of the river to power sawmills, is now classified as a retired hydroelectric dam. A plan to remove the Sixth Street Dam and beautification dams below is being developed by Grand Rapids Whitewater.
- Downstream from Grand Rapids, a navigation channel of eight feet is maintained from the mouth of the Bass River to Lake Michigan. The channel's deep profile and steep banks often prevents the natural development of habitat for fish and macroinvertebrates.

Pollution in the River

- In 2015, Grand Rapids completed its storm sewer separation, eliminating raw sewage spills into the Grand River from the Grand Rapids sewer system.
- There are 189 municipal and industrial discharges to surface waters of the entire watershed. Most of these point sources of pollution have adequate controls and comply with Michigan water quality standards.
- Non-point source pollution typically contributes some of the largest nutrient loads to Lake Michigan. This come from runoff from lawns, agricultural lands, and from treated wastewater from some urban areas.
- PFAS (Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances), a likely carcinogen used in manufacturing, is being discovered in groundwater and streams in the watershed.

Fish & Wildlife

- 107 species of fish live in the watershed
- River sturgeon have a population of around 100 individuals.
- Threatened species in the River are lake sturgeon, river redhorse, and cisco.
- The pugnose shiner has become endangered.
- Aquatic pest species reported in the watershed include common carp, round goby, sea lamprey, zebra mussel, curly leaf pondweed and Eurasian water milfoil.

Recreation

- Fishing is popular in the Grand River. Fish in the River include steelhead, salmon, smallmouth bass, lake trout, coho, skamania, catfish, bass and walleye.
- Kayaking and rowing above the 6th Street dam are popular recreational activities. Local schools and clubs use the river for practice and regattas.
- Several parks and pathways along the riverbanks provide access to the water and serve as locations for local festivals and activities.