

"THE GRAND RIVER, A REPORT"



Ron Vance with a couple of Grand River Smallmouth Bass

The **Grand River is a great fishery** that is **navigable**, easily **accessible**, and **close to home** for West Michigan residents. It is the **longest river in Michigan** and flows from near Jackson to Grand Haven and Lake Michigan for **262 miles**. Its waters **drop 552 feet** from the headwaters to the river mouth, including **14 dams**. An average of **4 billion gallons of water daily** flowed past Grand Rapids in 2009. There are **95 native fish species in the Grand River watershed**. **Pike, Musky, Walleye, Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, Channel Catfish, and Flathead Catfish** are just **a few**. Also, migratory Salmon and Steelhead use the river on a seasonal basis.

On Monday, **June 13, 2011**, I fished the **Grand River** at Grand Rapids **with Ron Vance**. There was a fairly fast **current** of about **3-4 mph**. It was a **typical cold front day**, with **clear blue sky and light wind**. Water levels were around 3-4 feet above summer lows, but the **water level was falling, a good sign**. **No trailers or other boats were at the launch site, a bad sign!** A little over **a week ago, it was in flood stage and unfishable**. In a **4 mile stretch** of the river, **3 deeper areas** and their surrounding shallows were **picked for thorough fishing** by "**straining the water**" with **different sized Spoonplugs**. At the first hole, some smallmouth were caught trolling a #400 Spoonplug (4-6 ft.) going downstream but not going upstream. Both speed and

depth are **different** for that lure, depending on whether you are **going with or against the current**. Larger **lures were run down to about 14 feet** following different breaklines, but **the only action was found to be in 4-6 feet**, and a **walking lure seemed to be the key** to getting strikes. This pattern was found to be mostly true at the other holes also. One of the **first objectives** of using Spoonplugging procedures to strain the water is to **find the depth that the fish are active at that time**. In this case, the **fish remained active at the 4-6 foot depths most of the day (8AM-3PM)**.

Several **contact points** and spots where fish were caught were **anchored on and cast** with cranks, blades, and jigs, but **no fish were caught on the cast**. **Both casting and trolling presentations are recommended for every fishing trip** whenever possible, as there will be days when only one or the other will be effective. **Many are reluctant to troll Spoonplugs in a river** for fear of **losing** them. With **proper procedures** and equipment, this is **not a problem**. The weight of a Spoonplug allows it to **drop off of a snag more easily than a floating crankbait**. By **reversing the motor** up to a snag and vigorously **popping the rod**, many **lures can be freed**. If not, continue going beyond the snagged lure until there is a low angle to the line, then jerk hard. Beyond that, a **good lure knocker usually does the job**. On this day **we had many snags but in 7 hours lost no Spoonplugs trolling**, and **didn't even get out the lure knocker**. We did, however, **lose 2 jigs casting!** A number of **smallmouth bass** to 15 inches were caught that day, as well as a 26 inch **pike**, providing a fun day of fishing.

I believe that the **Grand River is an underfished resource**. With the **good water color and current**, it is the **ideal place to go during a cold front** (how often do we have weather in Michigan that is not affected by a cold front?). Many people that come to the Muskegon Spoonplugging Outing fish Spring Lake near Grand Haven. They have caught many large Northern Pike, Smallmouth Bass, Largemouth Bass, walleye, drum, and catfish there. What they may not realize is that **Spring Lake is just a large bayou of the Grand River**, where current and many more big fish reside.

Chase Klinesteker