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