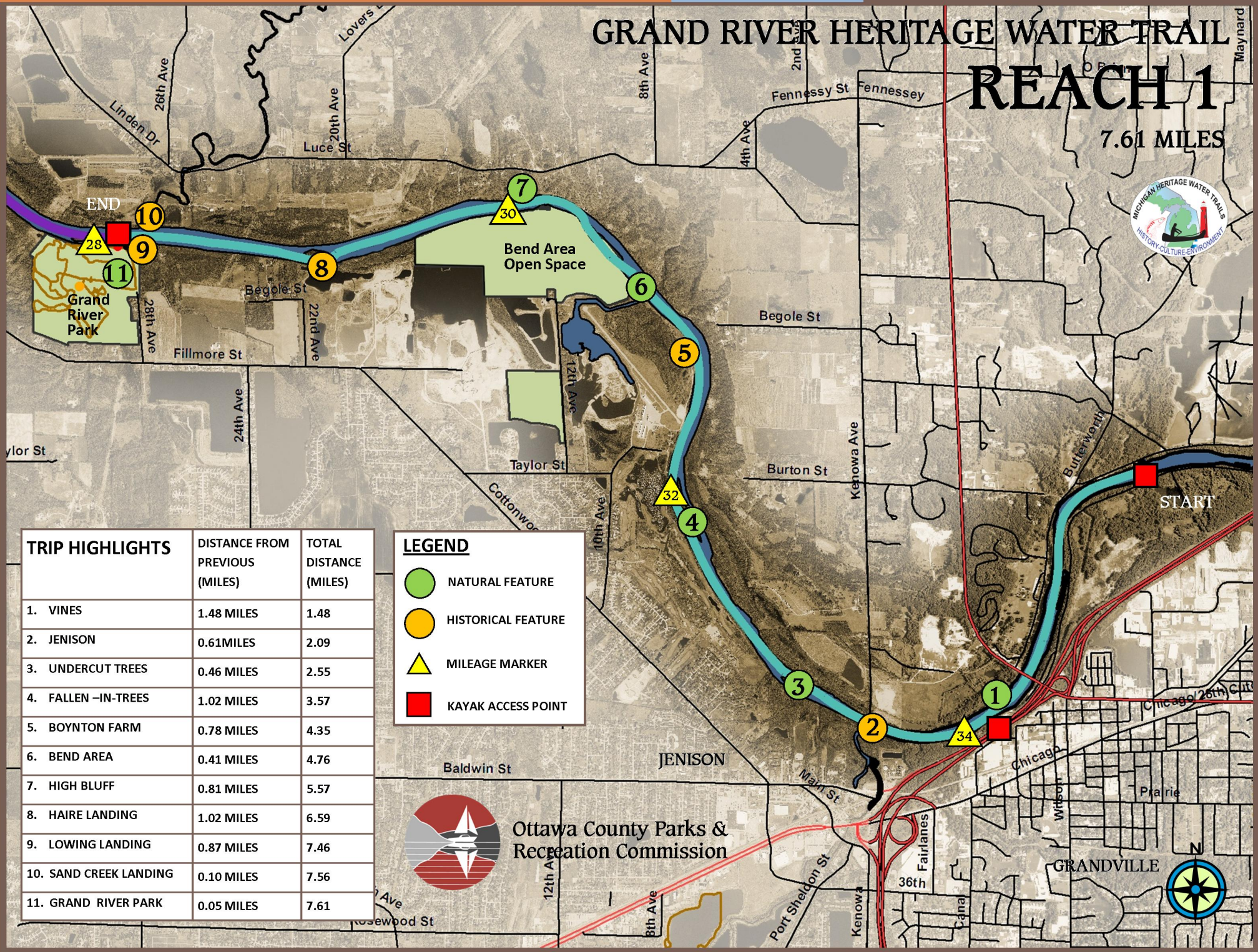
GRAND RIVER HERITAGE WATER TRAIL

REACH 1

7.61 MILES



TRIP HIGHLIGHTS	DISTANCE FROM PREVIOUS (MILES)	TOTAL DISTANCE (MILES)
1. VINES	1.48 MILES	1.48
2. JENISON	0.61MILES	2.09
3. UNDERCUT TREES	0.46 MILES	2.55
4. FALLEN –IN-TREES	1.02 MILES	3.57
5. BOYNTON FARM	0.78 MILES	4.35
6. BEND AREA	0.41 MILES	4.76
7. HIGH BLUFF	0.81 MILES	5.57
8. HAIRE LANDING	1.02 MILES	6.59
9. LOWING LANDING	0.87 MILES	7.46
10. SAND CREEK LANDING	0.10 MILES	7.56
11. GRAND RIVER PARK	0.05 MILES	7.61

LEGEND

- NATURAL FEATURE
- HISTORICAL FEATURE
- MILEAGE MARKER
- KAYAK ACCESS POINT

Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission

GRAND RIVER HERITAGE WATER TRAIL 7.61 MILES

REACH 1

1 UNIQUE VINE GROWTH

Leaving Johnson Park, notice that vines are prevalent along the north side bank of the river. Approaching the GPS point you will see wild grape vines hanging from tree limbs and growing up tree stalks. There are many examples of branches being pulled into the water from the weight of the vines. Wild grapes are a berry that many birds love, so the presence of these plants encourages their presence. These vines also have a very interesting symbiotic relationship with the trees they occupy. Grape Vines can naturally prune the tree keeping it in better health. They also provide shade that provides protection from the sun in order to keep the soil from becoming to dry and stressing the tree. However, vines can also grow large enough to choke out a tree, heavy enough to bend limbs to the ground and potentially killing the tree. Intertwined with wild grape vines you will also see Poison Ivy and Virginia Creeper. Poison Ivy is the most common allergy in the country, affecting over half of the population. Poison Ivy grows flower clusters that can reach up to three inches long. These clusters give way to berry-like fruits that appear a whitish-gray color. These fruits are enjoyed by birds and other animals such as raccoons. The leaves of poison ivy also provide food for white-tailed deer and for insects. Some birds use the thread like hairs from the Poison Ivy vine to build their nest. Also, the leaves and stems of poison ivy can provide shelter for small animals. Poison Ivy will often grow together with wild grape vines and Virginia Creeper. Virginia Creeper also produces berries and leaves that are eaten by an array of animals. Many moth caterpillars are known to eat the leaves of Virginia Creeper. Do not sample a Virginia creeper berry, as they are poisonous to humans. Virginia Creeper is a parasitic vine, meaning that it often slowly kills the host plant it is growing on.

2 JENISON SITE

The site of Jenisonville or Jenison is located along the south bank of the Grand River at the mouth of Rush Creek. Lemuel and Hiram settled in Jenison in 1836 and established a sawmill and gristmill. Hiram Jenison purchased 1,600 acres of pine timber along Rush Creek and H & L Jenison and Company cut over one million board feet of lumber in their first year. A hotel was built in 1837. By 1876 the settlement had grown to include 25 or 30 families with 19 buildings including the mills with a mill pond, two dry goods stores and a hardware store.

3 UNDERCUT TREES

Approaching the little Island near this GPS point, notice some trees that are about to fall into the river, along with some trees whose roots are exposed and being undercut by the river. The constant movement of water, both the flow of the river, and the movement up and down during different seasons, causes erosion along the banks of the river. An undercut tree or bank can provide beneficial habitat for many types of species, because they provide two basic protections that are necessary in the river. First, all undercuts provide needed overhead protection from predators- they provide an area for insects and small fish to hide from birds. Second, they offer protection from strong water currents. Often these undercuts provide shallow pools with very little motion, which can be optimal nesting areas for fish.

4 FALLEN TREES HABITAT

This GPS point is indicating a stretch between the north bank of the river and the bank of the island that has multiple examples of trees that have fallen into the river due to undercutting. There are as many as ten trees in this stretch, making it difficult to navigate for larger boats. When trees become so undercut by the river that they are no longer able to support themselves, they fall into the river. Some trees will stay connected to the bank creating a fallen tree habitat with its own river currents and inhabitants. Other trees will break away from the bank and float downriver. On the Grand River, many of the trees that fall into the river end up in log jams at the heads of islands. Both of these scenarios play a significant role in river ecology by providing shelter and habitat for many species of animals. The most recognizable inhabitant of these fallen tree habitats will be turtles. Turtles are cold blooded reptiles, so they often like to spend their time lying out in the sun during the day. In a river ecosystem, fallen trees provide them a place to sit that is out of the water, out of the shade of the bank, and in the open sunlight.

5 BOYNTON FARM

Also known as River Park, this landing with a picnic pavilion was established by the Grand River Boat Line as a stop-over for its steamships (1906). Boynton's Farm was also known to be a favorite picnic area for excursions by churches and the Grand Rapids Board of Trade. Today, the picnic grounds have been restored by landowner Bill Boynton, who also owns and operates the Grand Lady, a modern riverboat with two stern paddlewheels constructed in the style of the steamboats that plied the Grand River in the 1800's.

6 BEND AREA OPEN SPACE - OTTAWA COUNTY

Approaching from the east, you will know you are almost at the Bend Area when you see an open field and a set of mysterious train tracks that run into the water. This open field used to serve as a campground. The train tracks are used to move the "Grand Lady" river boat in and out of the water each spring and fall. Approaching from the west you will see a large inlet that leads to an inland lake that was created from aggregate mining. The Bend Area is a piece of property that in the future will demonstrate the integration of aggregate mining and wetland protection. The concept being applied to this property is called "wetland banking". Wetland banking is one type of post-mining land-use that is especially relevant to aggregate mining, because the landscape features created through the mining process produce essential elements to generate new wetlands. The Bend Area has several natural and man-made characteristics that provide a favorable site to create wetlands. The site already has approximately 160 acres of existing wetlands, and it exists along the Grand River, a natural corridor for migrating birds. Another positive factor in creating wetland habitat in this location is the quality of plant and wildlife in the surrounding area. An inventory of native plants was taken near the mining site that showed an impressive number of wetland species. Also an inventory of bird species shows there were fifty-three bird species present including the Bald Eagle and the Golden Eagle. Having these plant and bird species in an area that has active mining operations to the immediate east and west side is a strong indication of the compatibility of mining and wetland development.

7 HIGH BLUFFS

Watching the river bank in this area you will notice immediately a change in landscape. On the north side of the river, notice the bank extends upward, with the bank reaching heights nearly 100 feet above the river. A slight change in river geography such as this high bluff creates the opportunity to view species that are not well adapted to the lower banks of the river but thrive high above the river. For example high bluffs provide good conditions for very large Red Maples and Red Oaks that cannot grow along the lower banks of the river.

8 HAIRE LANDING SITE

John Haire purchased land at this location of the south bank of the Grand River in 1851 and built a steam sawmill in 1856. He also built a large boarding house, some tenant houses, a store, a blacksmith shop, and some barns. A log family home was later replaced with a large cement house which included a dining room which could seat 25. The sawmill was destroyed by fire in 1864, rebuilt in 1872, and burned again in 1877. An 1864 map showed 13 buildings including a school house. A cemetery which still exists today includes the graves of John Haire and his wife. The 1876 plat book contains an engraving of showing the large cement house with fenced in grounds, landscaping and people playing croquet.

9 SAND CREEK LANDING SITE

Sand Creek Landing was a popular stopover for steamboats including the steamer Olive Branch in the 1850's. An 1864 map of Ottawa County shows a road along the creek to the river and four buildings including a sawmill. A mill pond and school are shown on later maps.

10 OHIO DOCK / LOWING LANDING SITE

Located within what is now Grand River Park, Ohio Dock or Stephen Lowing Landing was the site of three sawmills built at different times by Stephen Lowing. Stephen Lowing arrived in Ottawa County from New York and purchased 80 acres of land before returning to New York. He returned to the Grand River valley by boat in 1841 with a team of oxen, farming and lumbering equipment and built a crude house. Over time he built a lumber camp, a series of saw mills with a mill pond, a boarding house, a store and a post office. He served as the first post-master in Georgetown from 1850-1854. With so many activities in his settlement, it became known as the "Beehive" by area residents.

11 GRAND RIVER PARK - OTTAWA COUNTY

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MICHIGAN HERITAGE WATER TRAILS
HISTORY-CULTURE-ENVIRONMENT