

My name is Austin Alexander. I am 14 years old and have been fly fishing for three years. When I was eleven, I was fortunate to be sponsored by the Headwaters Chapter of Trout Unlimited to attend Youth Conservation and Fly Fishing School. This was a four day long program held at the Ram Center on Higgins Lake. After learning about conservation and learning to fly fish, John and Sue Walters took me in to stay at their home for the rest of that week. I fell immediately in love with the sport, but John and Sue made it my passion. They taught me many things; one of the most important that I practice is catch & release when trout fishing. Since then, they have allowed me to stay with them for a week each summer to fish with them. I have successfully fished the North Branch & Main Branch of the Au Sable, Black, Manistee rivers; but my favorite is the Pigeon River.

This year when I was at their home, we fished every day on the Pigeon River (No Joke). I caught a number of trout including all three species: Brookies, Browns, and Rainbows. Some of them that I will always remember were a 13" and 11" Brookie, and a 20" Brown. All of the fish we caught were very large and healthy. While fishing, John and I saw a total of seven fawns; one of them was actually in the river. We helped it to a shallow spot, it stood up in the grass, we took a picture of it and it escaped what could have been a horrible fate. This fawn was less than a week old. Every year I have gone fishing with John and Sue I have left with lifelong memories and new stories to tell, especially this year.

Unfortunately, I recently received bad news of the Pigeon River where we had fished the week before. There is a private dam a few upstream from where we fish called Song of the Morning Ranch dam. I was told there was a discharge of tons and tons of sediment released that killed lots of fish and destroyed excellent trout habitat needed for survival. All of the fish I caught are now believed to be dead. I can no longer look forward to what the fishing will be like for quite some time and adding to the life long memories I have had on the Pigeon River. The only hope I have is for restoration and a successful return of the river in years to come.

I believe this dam should no longer be in use and able to ever cause such devastating damage to the Pigeon River, that I have come to know and love, again. Maybe with years of hard work our river can become as amazingly beautiful and bountiful as in years past.

Austin Alexander
3638 Squires Pl
Howell, MI 48855
(517) 545-7423