

Outstanding Project Award for Cedars for the Au Sable!

For 17 years, Howard N. Johnson has been bringing Northern white-cedar trees back to the Au Sable and Manistee river watersheds. As the founder and chair of Cedars for the Au Sable, Johnson was recognized for his dedication by the Michigan DNR with an Outstanding Project Award at the February 1st annual meeting of the Mason-Griffith Founders Chapter of TU. Cedars for the Au Sable, a project of the Au Sable River Property Owners Association, coordinates a network of volunteers that have planted over 18,000 cedar seedlings since 1997. With a seedling survival rate of over 70%, Cedars of the Au Sable is safeguarding the future of the Au Sable and Manistee rivers as healthy cold water fisheries.

Long-living cedars have been a vital part of the northern Michigan river ecosystem for centuries. As mature trees, they provide stream shading, bank stabilization and undercut bank cover for fish. Once the tree dies into the river, it's sweeping trunk and branches become protection and habitat for fish, micro-invertebrates and other food sources.

Recent years have seen the disappearance of young cedars, believed to be the result of severe over-browsing by deer and hare. Key to the current regeneration of cedar stands has been a special cedar seedling planting kit developed by Johnson and Cedars of the Au Sable. The kit includes cedar seedlings and protective fencing as well as education and continued oversight to ensure the seedling reaches maturity.