

Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.
Board Meeting Minutes
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan
Thursday, August 26, 2010

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Matt Meersman, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Jim Coury, Rachel (Dennis) Smith, Geoff Cripe, Melanie Stoughton, Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Eric Kerney, Ron Niezgodski, Daragh Deegan
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Chris Bauer, MDNRE Water Bureau
- Visitors –Ray Leising; Roxanne Barton; Brian Luser, Steuben County SWCD; Al Wesley, Citizens for a Quiet Countryside

Everyone present introduced themselves. Dona Hunter told Matt that she would be unable to attend due to another meeting that had been rescheduled several times.

Minutes of the June board meeting were presented with a noted change requested by Dona Hunter. The original June meeting minutes stated that the LaGrange County SWCD had received a GLC Grant for the north branch of the Elkhart River. The grant was in fact for the Little Elkhart River. The minutes were approved on a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Jim Coury.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Danielle Meersman showing expenses of \$1,680.00 (for contract labor) with total assets of \$59,890.52. Rudy Kappe made a motion to approve the report; seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried. Danielle reported that she received the \$4,200 check for our Freshwater Future Grant (awarded July 1). Additionally, Danielle received membership checks totaling \$50.00 and a \$50.00 donation from Rudy Kappe. All of these receivables will be reflected in the September report.

Outreach Coordinator's Report was presented by Leah Cooper. Leah stated that the Fall edition of *RiverCurrents* was nearly complete. Additionally, Leah stated that there have been several "Events" added to the web site, and encouraged everyone to send their event to her to post on the FotSJR web site. Leah also stated that she attended the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) Capacity meeting on July 1 in Portage (IN) hosted by Freshwater Future. About 60 people participated in this event to share project ideas and identify collaborative opportunities for GLRI projects. While most of the projects were outside the SJRW area, Leah stated this was good event to attend as there was a lot of information relative to GLRI funding in general.

Branch County Conservation District WQ Monitoring Assistance – Matt stated that the FotSJR has offered the use of the water quality equipment to Branch County CD. Ray Leising currently has most of the equipment. He updated the inventory and offered to help Branch County with their monitoring program. Melanie Stoughton gave the following dates for the monitoring: Training Day – September 25th (9:00 a.m., Branch Area Career Center); Groups to do the collecting – October 2nd (9:00 a.m.); Sort and identify water collected – October 6th (5:00 p.m.)

Fish Passage Barrier Inventory Update - FotSJR is working with the Potawatomi RC&D and a diverse group of partners to conduct an inventory of fish passage barriers in the SJRW. An inventory of dams is being completed to help select high priority sub-watersheds for a more detailed field survey. The goal of this project is to prioritize fish passage barriers in the watershed and identify a minimum of ten that

meet conditions for immediate removal or further study. The final report will provide guidance and justification for the funding of barrier removal projects by local partners in the future. Help is needed in gathering information. Local knowledge related to the barriers will lead to a successful inventory.

The Advisory Committee is especially interested in identifying dams, weirs, or culverts preventing fish passage with owners who may be interested in barrier removal options. Matt is keeping track of time, mileage, etc. which goes towards the grant match. A field survey has been completed of a tributary to the SJR that crosses Red Bud Trail in Buchanan. The creek is loaded with salmonid and trout, but there is a culvert blocking their upper migration.

Commemorative Bench/Stone – Before moving on to New Business, Rudy asked for the status of the bench or stone for Al and Margaret. This item should remain on the Old Business section of the agenda until it is completed. Additionally, Rudy asked if there were any updates relative to the Smith's. Matt said he talked to their daughter and they have already moved to Battle Creek. Rachel (Dennis) Smith said she would take on the pricing task to help move this business forward.

Fall River Currents Newsletter – Matt presented a mailing alternative for the Fall newsletter edition. Normally, Leah prepares the mailing (sealing, labeling, stamping, mailing) of the newsletter. The average cost has been around \$90.00 plus supplies. Leah will be on vacation the week the newsletter is to mail, and she had the printer quote on having them process the newsletter for the mailing. The cost will be \$75.00+postage (of around .10/piece for bulk rate). This will result in a small savings and will improve the delivery time of getting the newsletter in the mail stream. Rudy Kappe made a motion to approve the \$75.00+postage for the Fall newsletter. Danielle Meersman seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Partner Project Commitment Status update – Matt and Geoff continue to update our Partner Project/Match Commitments, and Leah will keep the web site updated accordingly.

Matt stated that the following partner projects ***have been approved:***

- Branch CD Stream Monitoring in Branch-Hodunk
- Branch CD Prairie River WMP project
- Calhoun CD GLRI AWEP Implementation in SE Lake Michigan Watershed

The following partner projects ***were not approved:***

- Kalamazoo Nature Center 5 Star Wetland Grant for Gourdneck Creek
- Delta Institute GLRI PES proposal
- MDA GLRI Targeted efforts for repairing Lake Michigan Health.

Other Board Related Items:

- Matt stated that the USEPA sent the contracts to be signed for the Wetland Program Development Grant awarded earlier this year (in the amount of \$115,000). The contracts need to be signed and sent back immediately. Rudy Kappe made a motion to approve the signing of the USEPA contract; seconded by Ron Niezgodski. Motion carried.
- Matt noted that both he and Leah would be attending the Getting in Step Outreach Workshop in Indianapolis on September 16th, and encouraged others to attend. This workshop will review the basic building blocks for developing effective outreach campaigns through social marketing techniques. Chris Bauer noted that she has extra copies of the "In Step" manual for those interested.

- Danielle asked Leah about the progress of the Lunkers request for funding. Leah stated that she turned in the necessary forms in late July, and we should hopefully hear something by the end of September.
- Rudy asked about Al Smith's concern over the recent Kalamazoo oil spill entering the St. Joseph River Watershed. Jay Wesley of the MDNRE Fisheries Division responded that there was no need to be concerned about any connections between the watersheds.
- Jim Coury gave a detailed update of the Kalamazoo River oil spill cleanup process.
- Melanie, asking on behalf of Amy DeShon of the St. Joseph County CD, requested much needed support for the updating of the "Paddling Guide". They would appreciate any support the Friends could provide. They have already asked the Nottawaseppi Tribe for \$1,000.
- Geoff noted there would be a Conservation Easement Workshop on September 20th. He will email a flyer to Leah and she will post the event on the web site.

Items from the Floor:

- Dave Foerster with the Two Rivers Coalition (TRC) presented a copy of a request for support letter from Kevin Haight of TRC for the "Walk, Paddle and Roll" fundraiser in conjunction with Freshwater Future. Kevin will be paddling the Paw Paw River to raise funds for TRC and Freshwater Future as part of his "River Odyssey". Dave encouraged everyone to donate to the cause online at <http://www.firstgiving.com/kevinhaight>. You can read updates on Kevin's progress at <http://www.tworiverscoalition.org>.
- Chris Bauer stated there is 319 NPS funding available. Full proposals are due in October. Chris also stated that the MDNRE will launch a new program beginning October 1st call the "Recreation Passport". The \$10 passport replaced the state park sticker and you can get into all 98 state parks and recreation areas. Chris also left copies of "Oil Spill: Answers to Frequently Asked Questions about the Enbridge Oil Spill" for those looking for information about the oil spill on the Kalamazoo River.
- Dave Foerster mentioned that there would be a meeting the week of August 30 to discuss the upstream sources of E. coli on the Black River. He felt the City of South Haven was taking an innovative approach to water quality monitoring by getting the local citizens involved.
- Jeff Reece reminded everyone that Twin Branch Dam draw down will start September 23rd. The river will be lowered by a total five (5) feet (around 6 inches per day until the 5 feet is reached). Repairs on the dam will start after the water levels have been lowered. After the repairs are complete, the river should be back to normal levels by October 14th.
- Al Wesley representing Citizens for a Quiet Countryside, a group of concerned neighbors who live on the St. Joe River near the Mottville, MI presented his groups ongoing struggle with noise pollution on their portion of the river. They have been struggling with noise pollution on the St. Joe River in a rural area created by several businesses along the river in St. Joe County. The businesses are across the river in Cass County. They suspect two of the businesses, a rubber recycler and a wood shredder might be contributing to water pollution on the St. Joe. Al presented his group's concerns and asked if anyone had suggestions or advice to improve the situation. Chris Bauer noted she would like to connect with Al after the meeting to exchange contact information/resources. Al thanked everyone for their input and suggestions, and noted that his organization would like to get more involved with the FotSJR.

Meeting adjourned at 2:40 p.m. with a motion made by Matt Meersman and seconded by Rudy Kappe. The next meeting will take place September 23, 2010 in Three Rivers, Michigan.