

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan
Thursday, September 22, 2011 – 1:00 p.m.

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m. and briefly reviewed the protocol for the meeting. He then asked for introductions.

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Matt Meersman, Daragh Deegan, Brian Musser, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Maria Schaefer, Ron Niezgodski, and Dona Hunter
- Watershed Council Members - Chris Bauer, MDEQ-WRD; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC
- Visitors – Kameron Jordan, MDEQ Water Resources Division; Roxanne Barton; Rachel Smith, Branch Co. CD Watershed Coordinator

MINUTES of the August Board Meeting were approved on a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

TREASURER’S REPORT – Danielle Meersman presented the monthly Financial Update. As of September 22, 2011 the total assets of Friends of the St Joe River Association were \$50,708.58. The treasurer’s report was approved on a motion made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Rudy Kappe.

WETLAND PARTNERSHIP PROJECT UPDATE – Matt reported that they are about 1 year into the three year project. One of the most important items to follow through with right now is acquiring parcel data from all of the counties in the watershed. Several counties have already provided the data. No contact has been made with DeKalb County so far; LaGrange County data should be available soon; St. Joseph County, Indiana should be available; Rachel Smith will contact Branch County; Brian Musser will follow-up with Hillsdale County; and Matt is working on getting the Kalamazoo data.

Matt attended the Michigan Wetland Association Conference and presented information about the Wetland Partnership Project. It was a great conference, with a lot of interesting people and approaches to wetland issues. MDEQ is using some other grant funds for the Wetland Functional Assessment and will submit larger invoices for future work. Marcy Colclough also did presentations this past month for the Benton Harbor/St. Joe Exchange Club and for about 75 people for Cornerstone Alliance.

Kameron Jordan discussed wetland banking and how this would fit in with the wetland project. He feels this will make an excellent tool to aid in determining locations to set up wetland mitigation banks.

FISH MIGRATION BARRIER WORKSHOP – This workshop will wrap up the project which has been done in cooperation with Potawatomi RC&D. Matt has submitted an invoice to the RC&D for \$2,500 to help with expenses for the workshop. Leah Cooper did a great job on the promotional flyer, which Matt passed out for everyone. They are hoping to have 40 – 60 in attendance. Daragh Deegan has a 25 passenger van available for transportation and Martin Franke will have the LaGrange Co. SWCD 15 passenger van available. LaGrange County also has a 12 passenger van which Dona Hunter will schedule in case additional space is needed for transportation. Maria Schaffer reported that there will be 7 CECs available for those attending who would like to take advantage of it.

NEWSLETTER – Leah has completed the first draft of the next newsletter and it should be out soon.

LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR STEUBEN CO. SWCD – An electronic vote was taken to approve a letter of support written and sent for the 319 grant being submitted for updating the watershed management plan for Pigeon Creek. Approval was given and Matt submitted the letter.

BRANCH CO. COMMUNITY FOUNDATION – The Community Foundation will be celebrating their 20th anniversary with a meeting on October 4 from 5:30 – 7:30 p.m. Matt will get the display from Leah and invited other board members to join him in manning the display. and presenting an update on current activities. The foundation has been supportive of the FotSJR and several grants were received from 1995 – 2002. The FotSJR received the Foundation’s very first grant.

VILLAGE OF PAW PAW 319 GRANT SUPPORT – Marcy is rewriting a grant to focus on ag practices in the south branch of the Paw Paw River. The FotSJR submitted a letter of support for the original proposal that included local match. The urban portion of the original project was removed. The Village of Paw Paw has set aside \$60,000 to address the urban practices, including funds for environmental incentives to improve water quality. Ron Niezgodski made a motion to send a letter of commitment similar to the original; seconded by Rudy Kappe; motion carried.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR:

- Chris Bauer reported that one of two notices of intent submitted has been accepted for a full proposal. A letter of support is being requested for a two year planning grant for the

Portage River submitted by Calhoun Co. There is \$3,000 in the grant for outreach. Rudy Kappe moved to send a letter of support; Dona Hunter seconded the motion; motion carried.

- Daragh Deegan reported for Tim Cataldo about the river clean-up just held on a 5 mile section of the Elkhart River through downtown Elkhart. 3000# of trash were collected, including more than 40 tires.
- Marcy Colclough reported on a water quality monitoring grant from DEQ partnering with the City of South Haven to look at *Ecoli* in the Black River and Pine/Mill Creeks of the Paw Paw River for two years. MSU has developed an easier and cheaper method to identify sources of *Ecoli* without doing DNA testing.
- Rachel Smith reported on the Prairie River project she is involved with. Their first public meeting will be held September 29 at 7:30 p.m. at Glen Oaks. Another one will be scheduled in Branch County sometime before October 13. She has just started completing BEHI in the watershed. Bank Erosion Hazard Index is a way to look at a stream bank and assess what is the potential for erosion and the susceptibility to erosion. Matt stated he has a data base set up that will aid in calculating the results which he will send to Rachel.
- Ratty Adams asked how the river clean-up is going in St. Joseph County. Matt received word from John Nelson who is on the St. Joseph Co. CD board and he said it was going well. He also said Amy DeShon is no longer with the St. Joseph Co. CD. The board is trying to help cover the office at least part of the time.
- Ratty also expressed a concern about Leah having a new job and also fulfilling her obligations to the Friends. Matt reported she is doing well – maybe a little stressed, but otherwise ok.

Next Meeting – October 27, 2011 at the Three Rivers Public Library at 1:00 pm

Minutes recorded and typed by Dona Hunter, Secretary.