

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, October 24, 2013—1:00 PM**  
**Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, Rachel Smith, Maria Mast, Ron Niezgodski, Jim Coury, Danielle Meersman
- **Watershed Council:** Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jen Miller, St. Joe County CD, Bob Jones, LaGrange SWCD; Bill Courliss, Union Lake Association; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Joe Parman, Van Buren County Drain Commission; Jeffery Reece, Indiana Michigan Power
- **Visitors:** Deborah Haak, Becky Shank, Patty Hoch-Meiluish

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

**Minutes** of the September 2013 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by Maria Mast and seconded by Rachel Smith. Motion carried.

**Treasurers Report** was presented by Danielle Meersman. Grant income has come in, and some expenses were paid out to the SWMLC for wetland partnership project events. Event Income was at \$420.00 for the St. Joe River Races. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was made by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Maria Mast. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Wetland Partnership Project**--Matt Meersman summarized the wetland partnership project and explained the functions that are evaluated within the analysis. Matt noted that the next step will be to reach out to people within targeted areas of both residential and municipal portions of the watershed. Matt noted that there were no events held since the last board meeting. Marcy Colclough updated everyone on the progress of scheduling outreach events in Indiana. There will be an event held at Ferrettie/Baugo Park in St. Joseph County, Indiana on December 4<sup>th</sup> that will focus on land use planning for wetland protection and restoration. A draft flyer was passed around the table. Credits for land use planners will be available at the December 4<sup>th</sup> event, and speakers are currently being set. The venue for the event has the capacity to hold fifty people, and wide scale promotion is underway to advertise the meeting. Maria Mast asked what the target audience for this event would be. Marcy stated that anyone sitting on a planning commission, other agencies, land developers, and real estate people would benefit greatly from attending. Marcy also noted that she would like to also schedule a similar event to be held in Michigan sometime within December to mid-January. The next quarterly meeting for the project will be held at 10:15 am on Thursday, December 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Membership Development and Fundraising**—Matt briefly summarized the intended goal of the Clean Water Campaign, and updated the group on Bill Courliss's meeting to discuss participation with the Union City Department of Public Works to include a donation request on their electric bills mailed out to Union City residents. Currently, more details need to be worked out regarding how the funds will be spread across the watershed. From the meeting held in Union City, Bill Courliss discussed the city's desire for a kayak access area, and the possibilities to have some of those funds collected through the campaign to go towards that project. In relation to potential campaign participants requesting earmarked funds, the board members agreed that more discussions will be required to help finalize the mission statement as well as develop documents that require transparency between both FotSJR and participating organizations/municipalities. Maria Mast thanked Bill Courliss for his time and hard work spent meeting with Union City.

**St. Joe River Races**—Danielle Meersman reported that the event had fairly good attendance. All of the registration proceeds went to the FotSJR, totaling approximately \$420. Matt stated it went well for a canoe

race, with about 40 people registered in one race or another. Matt and Danielle would like to promote the event even more next year, and increase the amount of people registering for the running races.

**Fall Newsletter**—Matt noted that there are a few new addresses for the mailing list. Bill Courliss asked if there could be a small piece on Union City and their interest in the Clean Water Campaign to help other municipalities be informed on the opportunity. Matt asked if Bill would be willing to write up an article and run it by the Union City DPW before sending it along to Rachel.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**Fish Passage Grant Support**—Potawatomi RC&D requested a letter of support for their grant proposal. Matt thanked those board members who voted via email to support the project. Matt Meersman summarized the goal of the project, with its focus being on the Paw Paw River Watershed. This grant project will take a similar project done on a broader scale through the St. Joe River Watershed and focus mainly on the Paw Paw River Watershed.

**GreenTown Michiana**—Marcy gave an overview of the water session that she had developed for the large event held at the beginning of October in South Bend, Indiana. Matt summarized the different topic areas that were highlighted and stated that overall; it was a great event to attend. While at GreenTown, Michiana Watershed approached Matt about working with FotSJR on an event approximately six months from now to keep the momentum of GreenTown Michiana going on a more local level. This could be a great opportunity to work within the Indiana portion of the watershed at a later date. Matt asked others who attended to share their thoughts on the event.

## **OTHER ITEMS**

None

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- **Becky Shank—Fabius Township Citizen’s Coalition:** Becky announced that Enbridge has granted funds to help construct an observation deck at the Coon Hollow Preserve in Three Rivers. Enbridge will award \$15,000 to the Fabius Township Wetlands Committee. The observation deck will be 48 feet with a 12’x12’ platform with benches at the end of the structure. Permits have been applied for through the MDEQ, and the deck will hopefully be completed by the summer.

Membership issues: Becky noted that she had not been receiving her membership dues notices. Matt will check on the membership notices that were previously mailed out via the postal service to ensure that they were mailed out this year, as Leah Cooper had completed this task in the past.

- **Marcy Colclough—SMPC:** Marcy reminded everyone that the Two Rivers Coalition Annual Meeting will be held on December 2<sup>nd</sup>, with Peter Sinclair set as the keynote speaker. The event will be held at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence.

Marcy announced that the state of Michigan is devising a “water strategy” steering committee in which she has been asked to sit on. There have been some regional meetings held already, and more meetings are scheduled in the future, with the next being held in Lansing.

- **Bob Jones—LaGrange SWCD:** Bob shared with the group a conference titled the “Idea Conference” that was held in Michigan City, Indiana. Bob talked about Krueger Middle School’s efforts to develop an environmental science area with various habitat types present to use as a teaching site, and the DNR’s interest in assisting in their education of efforts to prevent Sea Lampreys from entering their waterways.

## **NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 21<sup>st</sup> at 1:00pm in Three Rivers at the Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 2:28 pm.