

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan**  
**Thursday, May 27, 2010**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Amy Boetcher, Jim Coury, Rachel Dennis, Danielle Meersman, Matt Meersman
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Chris Bauer, MDNRE; Jeffrey Wenzel, St. Joseph County (MI) Drain Commission
- Visitors – Eric Kerney, Water Quality Specialist NHBPI; Amy DeShon, St. Joe County (MI) Conservation District; Joe Parman, Van Buren County Drain Commissioner; Roxanne Barton; Real Carriere

Everyone present introduced themselves. Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Dona Hunter, Rudy Kappe, and Melanie Stoughton told Matt they would be unable to attend.

**Minutes** of the April board meeting were approved on a motion made by Danielle Meersman and seconded by Rachel Dennis.

**Treasurer's Report** was presented by Danielle Meersman showing income of \$1,126.12 and expenses of \$1,370.91 with total assets of \$56,715.28. Matt Meersman made a motion to approve the report; seconded by Bruce Barton. Motion carried. Danielle reported that \$25,000 was put into a CD due on June 19, 2011 at a 1.14% interest rate.

**Outreach Coordinator's Report – Leah Cooper:**

- On May 8 the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission and the FotSJR hosted a workshop in St. Joseph, Michigan entitled "Zero in the middle: Landscaping for improved water quality." While the attendance was small (around 25), the participation and interaction among the guests and speakers was quite good. Mark O'Brien from the JFNew Native Plant Nursery spoke on the design, planning, implementation and maintenance of a native landscape. Additionally, Tracy Bronson (Calhoun Conservation District) spoke on utilizing rain barrels to supplement a healthy and native landscape. Leah was unable to secure a speaker for the "Zero in the middle" segment of the workshop. Subsequently, Leah provided the presentation information for that portion based on basic research of how not only phosphorus, but other naturally occurring compounds impact water quality.
- Leah announced the release of the Spring Newsletter edition of RiverCurrents. This edition focuses on Wetlands. Leah thanked everyone for their input and review, especially Chris Bauer, Angie Brown and Amy Boetcher. The Summer Newsletter edition will focus on fisheries.

**Spring Newsletter Distribution** included the mailing of 196 hard-copy newsletters, and nearly 60 copies sent via e-mail distribution. There were 300 copies of the newsletter ordered through the printer, and the balance of 100+ is available for public distribution. Eldred Adams will take 20 copies with him for an upcoming event in Sturgis. Jim Coury will take an additional 5 copies to distribute at Calhoun County.

**Wetland Grant Progress** - All of the information being requested by EPA has now been submitted so they can move forward with a contract. This \$115,000 is the biggest project taken on since the WMP. This will provide FotSJR with the ability to prioritize existing and past wetlands according to function of the wetland. This study will provide good documentation to target the enrollment of acres into WRP and other USDA programs. An extensive project budget was developed. Leah asked Matt if she could go ahead and put out the press release regarding this award, and Matt said that should be okay, especially since we noted the award the Spring Newsletter.

**New Grant Awards:**

- **Freshwater Future** – Leah Cooper announced that the FotSJR grant application to the Freshwater Future Foundation was approved in the amount of \$4,200. This grant will be used for a wetland coalition and media campaign in conjunction with the wetland grant. A total of \$5,500 was requested, but the Foundation was unable to award the total requested amount due to the number of competitive grant applications received during the funding cycle. Leah noted, however, that

Freshwater Future Foundation was highly complementary of the grant application and they will be recommending the FotSJR for additional grant opportunities. The contract for the current grant is expected by June 1, with the project to begin on July 1.

- **Heart of Cook Award** – On May 11, Leah Cooper and Rudy Kappe attended the grant awards ceremony at the Shadowland Ballroom in St. Joseph, Michigan. The FotSJR was presented with a \$2,000 award which will be used to carry out specific activities already committed to in the EPA wetland grant. Leah presented the award check to Matt Meersman.

**June Meeting Details** - The next meeting will be held on June 24 at the AEP Elkhart Service Center on Old US 20 (Toledo Road) from 1-3 p.m. This will be the first monthly Board meeting held in Indiana. Matt will create a Google Map that will be sent out with the monthly meeting reminder.

**FotSJR Equipment & Supplies** – Al Smith contacted Matt about picking up equipment and supplies that have been stored at the Smith's. They will be moving to Battle Creek and will not have a place to store the equipment. Matt and Danielle will make a trip to the Smith's to visit and pick up the equipment. Jim Coury told Matt and Danielle to let him know if they needed help or if there was more equipment than would fit in the back of their truck.

**Outreach Coordinator Contract Renewal** – Matt reminded the Board that Leah's contract would be expiring on July 1, 2010. The Board will not be holding its monthly meeting in July, so discussion about contract renewal will take place at the June meeting. Matt encouraged the Board to prepare for the discussion through email if necessary. It was suggested by Jim Coury to Leah Cooper that she complete a summary of accomplishments to present to the Board during the June meeting. Leah agreed that this would be a good thing to provide not only to the Board, but to the broader group as well to reflect completed projects and milestones.

**FotSJR Stickers** – Rachel Dennis donated a role of 500 FotSJR logo stickers. Some of the stickers were distributed to individuals present at the meeting. The remainder of the role was given to Leah. There was some discussion about sending the stickers to members who do not have email. The stickers could take the place of the membership cards that Margaret used to send. Rachel purchased the stickers in lieu of table gifts for people attending her wedding this summer. The Board thanked Rachel for her generosity.

#### **Items from the Floor:**

- Eldred Adams noted that the City of Sturgis will host its "Dam Days" from June 7-12.
- Rachel Dennis mentioned that the Three Rivers Water Festival will take place June 17-19.
- A reminder was made regarding the June 26 RiverFest in Middlebury, IN. This would be a great time to show our support for local watershed events taking place.
- Amy DeShon suggested that the FotSJR research the James A. & Faith Knight Foundation for funding projects within Jackson County (MI).
- Further discussion was considered on a bench or rock for Al & Margaret to commemorate all their tireless work in the SJR Watershed and for the Friends. Rachel Dennis was going to see if the parks department would allow the Friends to dedicate one of the benches going into the renovated park at Scidmore Park in Three Rivers to Al & Margaret. Jim Coury thought a big rock with a plaque would be a good idea too, and Danielle Meersman is going to look into pricing for a rock. There was also a suggestion of a tree planting or native planting plot along the Nottawa Creek in Athens dedicated to the Smith's.

**Meeting adjourned** early around 2:15 p.m. with a motion made by Jim Coury and seconded by Danielle Meersman after a reminder from Matt about the June 24 meeting scheduled in Elkhart, Indiana.