

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 26, 2014—1:00 PM
Pine Knob Park, Howe, Indiana

IN ATTENDANCE:

Directors: Matt Meersman, Danielle Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, Eldred Adams, Zac Martin, Ron Niezgodski, John Law, Ray Leising

- **Watershed Council:** Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Geoff Cripe, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy; Martin Franke, LaGrange SWCD; Nancy Brown, Elkhart Co. SWCD; Bill Courlis, Union Lake Association; Chris Bauer, MDEQ; Karen Mackowiak, St. Joseph River Basin Commission; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power
- **Visitors:** Ellen Hendrickson, MDARD; Mathew Linn, Cardno JFNew; John Richardson, Cardno JFNew; Korine Blyveis, Newberg Township; Jeff Blyveis; Tery Allen; Liz Allen; Tyrell Golden, USDA-NRCS; Brad Love, Branch CD

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:04 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

Minutes of the April and May 2014 board meetings were approved as submitted with a motion by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Ray Leising. Motion carried.

Treasurers Report was presented by Danielle Meersman. The treasurer's report was approved as submitted with a motion by Melanie Stoughton and seconded by Eldred Adams. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Wetland Partnership Project Matt Meersman briefly summarized the project for those in attendance. Matt reported that he continues to distribute the information out to the partners. Marcy Colclough summarized the outreach work completed by SWMPC to date.

Clean Water Campaign— Matt reported that there has not been any new activity in regards to the Clean Water Campaign. Matt briefly summarized the efforts to increase the businesses that are willing to participate in the Point of Sale program that could raise funds to implement projects throughout the St. Joseph River Watershed.

NEW BUSINESS

Resource Conservation Partnership Program (RCP) Project Meeting—Matt Meersman reported on a meeting held earlier this morning to bring together agencies and organizations within the watershed from both Michigan and Indiana that could help implement a potential project through USDA-NRCS.

Matt summarized the project as comparable to the model used for AWEP. Marcy Colclough of the SWMPC is currently responsible for organizing and drafting a proposal for the project, summarized what programs and practices would fall under the RCPP. The project is currently in drafting stages, and a pre-proposal will be submitted by the deadline.

OTHER ITEMS

- John Law: Briefly discussed a public outreach brochure describing an Indiana law on that lowers the property tax on land that is used as a buffer strip along drains.
- Matt Meersman: reported that he had been contacted by the Elkhart River Restoration Association regarding the dredging of Goshen Dam Pond. Nancy Brown stated that the Elkhart SWCD sent a letter of support on the project. Ron Niezgodski inquired about the amount of sediment that is planned to be removed. Matt reported that approximately 33 acres of the pond would be dredged, with improved recreation resulting from 300,000 yards of overall sediment removed. John Law recommended that a concise letter stating that dredging materials be disposed of in a responsible manner be drafted along with support of the project. Ron Niezgodski made the motion to write a letter of support, and seek out Daragh Deegan to consult on the project, with Ray Leising seconding. Motion carried.
- Eldred Adams: reported on the St. Joseph County CD river clean ups, and commended Jen Miller on her efforts to continue the project. At this time, Matt Meersman announced that Karen Mackowiack will be retiring soon, and Jen Miller from the St. Joseph County CD has taken a job in Washington D.C., and will be leaving at the end of July.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Geoff Cripe: reported that members of the Watershed Council have been using the Wetland Partnership Project data within their own projects to discuss water quality and quantity.
- Macy Colclough: Reported that the boat tour that had originally been planned in the summer had been canceled due to bad weather. Jeff Reece asked Marcy to update the group on the Fish Passage Project and the work completed to date on the Pucker St. Dam. Marcy reported that they are finalizing the designs in order to get cost estimates for the project. Planned removal date will be in 2015, and funding continues to be sought after.
- Jeff Reece: reported that the access site at the dam in Buchanan, MI may re-open by August 1st. Jeff also reported that some restoration work is underway on islands in the St. Joseph River in Elkhart, with Cardnow JFNew hired to complete the work.
- Terry Allen: briefly summarize the work of the local Rotary club, the mission of rotary in general and his desire to have Rotary clubs in the region more involved in watershed efforts.

Matt adjourned the meeting and invited everyone to participate in the kayak trip following the FotSJR Meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, August 21, 2014 at 1:00pm in Three Rivers at the Public Library.