

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, November 19, 2015—1:00 PM**  
**Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- **Directors:** Melanie Stoughton, Bob Jones, Ron Niezgodski, Ray Leising, John Law, Jeff Wenzel, Daragh Deegan, Bob Jones, Eric Kerney  
**Watershed Council:** Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jeremy Reiman, MACOG/SJRBC; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Don Stohler, Christiana Creek Association  
**Visitors:** Patty Hoch-Melsuch, Kieser & Assoc.; Reynaldo Hernandez, South Bend League of Women's Voters; Paul Sniadicki, Ontwa Twp. resident

Vice President Daragh Deegan called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

**Minutes** of the September 2015 board meeting were reviewed to approve. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Ron Niezgodski, and seconded by John Law. Motion carried.

**Treasurer's Report** was presented by Daragh Deegan, as prepared by Danielle Meersman. Daragh noted that there was not a lot of activity since the last treasurer's report, but that about \$248 was made through the river races and some membership dues. A motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Ray Leising, and seconded by Jeff Wenzel. Motion carried.

**OLD BUSINESS**

**Regional Conservation Partnership Project Update**—Marcy Colclough summarized the scope of the partnership project, and provided data regarding the first round of signup. Marcy noted that while Michigan succeeded in spending their allocated funds for this first sign up, Indiana spent all but \$90,000 of the funds their state was allocated for the length of the grant. Marcy reported that Indiana NRCS included a soil amendment of gypsum as a contracted practice, and that many landowners applied for this specific cost share practice. Marcy also noted that discussions regarding how to accurately report some of the data, and the overall reporting responsibilities between the partnering agencies are continuing on.

**CISMA Letters of Support**—Daragh reviewed the requests in October from CDs requesting letters of support from FotSJR on their Invasive Species grant proposals. Daragh noted that three letters of support were drafted on behalf of the group from Matt Meersman.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

**River Access**—John Law reported that he had been contacted by a woman forming a group regarding river access along the St. Joseph River, and that he was contacted based on his involvement with the Fly Fisher group. It was noted that Matt Meersman had also been approached, and that he was asked to attend monthly meetings in the South Bend area. In notes received by Matt to Daragh, Matt asked if another board member would be willing to attend the monthly meetings, as the main person, or possible alternate if Matt could not attend. Jeremy Reiman offered to attend the meetings, with Ron Neizgodski agreeing to serve as a back-up attendee to Matt and Jeremy.

**Union Lake Feasibility Study Request**— Daragh provided a brief update on the work beginning at Union Lake. Daragh noted that Bill Courliss, who was unable to attend the meeting, had more information regarding the work, but that along with an update, a request has been made to FotSJR. A consultant for the Union Lake Association is looking for studies/projects upstream of the Union Lake Watershed (Calhoun, Branch, and Hillsdale Counties). If anyone knows of a past study or project done in these areas, please pass the information along to Bill Courliss.

**MDEQ Water Quality Monitoring Site Requests**—Paul Sniadicki, of Ontwa Township, spoke to the members of FotSJR regarding the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality’s request of water quality monitoring sites for their upcoming sampling season. Paul asked FotSJR to strongly consider drafting a comment to MDEQ to request sites along Cobus Creek be added to the list. Paul noted that Cobus Creek is a very small, but important watershed, and needs to be included on the list to help receive future implementation funding. Paul noted the following locations that would be ideal sampling points: east of Edwardsburg on US-12, and an area along Elkhart Road that empties into Garver Lake. A motion to draft a letter requesting MDEQ water quality sampling points near the above mentioned locations along Cobus Creek was made by John Law, and seconded by Ray Leising. Motion carried.

**Annual Meeting Planning**—Daragh reported that Matt confirmed the annual meeting date for March 18, 2016 at the Sturges-Young Auditorium. The keynote speaker, Bob Bar, will speak on fluvial geology in the St. Joseph River Basin. Daragh noted that as the “unofficial” annual meeting marketing strategist, Jeff Wenzel will be brainstorming meeting titles. Any ideas can be emailed to Jeff. Regarding auction items, John Law reported that he will be donating a personalized FotSJR fly fishing box. Don Stohler noted that he will also donate a kayaking trip for anyone that will travel to Texas where he will be through the winter. Don also noted that the trip last year with the auction winner was great, and that he hoped he would be taking someone out again this year.

## **OTHER**

- Reynaldo Hernandez asked to be included under the Watershed Council. Marcy asked whether Mr. Hernandez had received and completed the required paperwork to be included on the council. Mr. Hernandez noted that he had not completed any paperwork. Marcy asked for the contact information needed to get the required paperwork to Mr. Hernandez.
- Don Stohler announced that there will be a spring cleanup along Christiana Creek, and that any volunteers are welcome to help. More information will be provided closer to the event.
- Marcy Colclough announced that the Two Rivers Coalition will hold their annual meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>. The keynote topic will be presented by two women that crafted their own canoe and paddled along the coast of Lake Michigan.
- Melanie Stoughton announced that the St. Joseph County Conservation District is holding a Christmas tree sale starting November 20<sup>th</sup>. Trees will start at \$35. Anyone interested should contact the CD office.
- Jeremy Reiman announced that the St. Joe River Basin Commission received grant funding through IDNR to do a watershed study in Cobus Creek. A consultant out of Warsaw, IN was chosen to do the study. Currently, the commission is looking for funds to continue the work into Michigan, since the awarded money from IDNR is only allowed to be used in Indiana.
- Daragh Deegan announced that the City of Elkhart received funding for a two year project to help the Blanding's Turtle population improve in Cobus Creek. Daragh noted that \$7,500 was awarded to fund a herpetologist's work to capture eggs from a local Blanding's Turtle. The eggs would then be given to local schools and cared for until they are ready to be introduced into the wild.

## **NEXT MEETING**

Next meeting scheduled for December 17, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. at Three Rivers Public Library.