

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 25, 2012—1:00pm
Three Rivers Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Eldred Adams, Melanie Stoughton, Matt Meersman, Jim Coury, Danielle Meersman, Maria Mast, Ray Leising, Bruce Barton
- Watershed Council: Jeff Reece, IMP; Don Stohler, Christiana Creek Coalition; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Eric Kurtz, Elkhart Co. SWCD; Dona Hunter, on behalf of LaGrange SWCD; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Bill Courliss, Union Lake Association; Jen Miller, St. Joseph (MI) Conservation District; Kathy Worst, Branch County Conservation District; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC
- Visitors: Roxanne Barton, landowner; Jim Mitchell, Rivertenders & SJRVFF; Ryan Watts, Rivertenders

MINUTES of the September meeting were approved on a motion made by Ray Leising and seconded by Maria Mast after noting Treasurer’s Report changes by Danielle detailed below.

TREASURER’S REPORT—was presented by Danielle Meersman, Treasurer. Danielle stated that the last report was just September 2012 and year to date, not a comparison of year to date financials. Change in August treasurer’s report was approved by Ray and seconded by Jim Coury. Annual website renewal payment to Wild Apricot was made this past month. No other activity was noted. Danielle did change cumulative net income due to an EPA grant income change of \$150. Overall loss of \$270 and \$3,150 annually was shown. Currently, there is \$47,395.27 in our account. Matt explained some of the fees regarding the Wild Apricot site, and what the annual fees cover as far as website development. Treasurer’s report was accepted by Maria Mast and seconded by Eldred Adams.

OLD BUSINESS

WETLAND PARTNERSHIP PROJECT— Maria Mast briefly summarized the Wetland Partnership Project to the group, highlighting the objectives of the project. The information collected will be used to help provide outreach to landowners owning high quality/high functioning wetlands on preservation and conservation. The next wetland partnership event titled, “Wetlands for Water Quality: The What, Why, in Howe” will be in the auditorium at the Howe School in Howe, Indiana on November 7th 6:30 pm to 8:00pm. The presentation will be similar to the Christiana Creek Event held earlier this fall. Landowners will be invited based on how much existing or

historic wetland they own that serves water quality related functions well. People that own a lot of land that remove sediment and take nutrients out of the water will be direct mailed. There will be exhibits set up for the Steuben SWCD and LaGrange SWCD, and information on both the St. Joe CD and Branch CD available at the event. Matt Meersman did encourage everyone that if there are any people on the direct mailing list they know, that a call to invite them to the event would be helpful to spread the word.

Parcel merging update: There are three counties left to complete. Brian Musser will be completing Elkhart County and Melanie Stoughton will be completing Calhoun County. Berrien County will be completed by Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, or Rachel Smith. Matt Meersman has set the goal for these merging projects to be completed by the next Wetland Partnership meeting scheduled for Thursday, November 15th.

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT/FUNDRAISING—Matt Meersman updated the board on membership activity. Over the past month there have not been any new memberships. Matt Meersman then introduced Sam Adams, son of Eldred Adams, to speak about fundraising strategies for the FotSJR Association. Sam Adams has worked in advertising and public relations with many companies, and currently works for Whirlpool in St. Joseph. Sam stressed the key point of doing reconnaissance on the market the group is trying to reach to determine what a stakeholder may be willing to spend on the cause. Developing a strong case for giving and finding those organizations with the power to help raise awareness were two of the central pieces of advice that Sam offered to the group.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR CONTRACT RENEWAL—Matt Meersman summarized the discussion that he had between Leah Cooper, FotSJR Outreach Coordinator regarding contract renewal. A committee was formed to revise the current Outreach Coordinator contract to decrease the amount of tasks to the most important tasks. Matt Meersman discussed with Leah what the cost would be if she charged us to just do the layout of the newsletter. Leah Cooper stated that at this time, she is no longer interested in carrying out all of the duties of the Outreach Coordinator, mostly because of her full time job with another agency. Leah did thank the board for the opportunities she had been given and also offered to be available to help during the transition period. The board discussed breaking apart some of the tasks within the Outreach Coordinator's duties and assigning these tasks to FotSJR board members. Jim Coury asked about hiring another individual to replace Leah. After reviewing the financials with the board, Danielle Meersman stated that the association currently does not have the ability to hire in a part time person without continuing to significantly reduce our assets. Danielle stated over the past three years, FotSJR has spent approximately \$33,000 in funds on our Outreach Coordinator while not receiving any significant supplemental funding to offset the cost. Matt Meersman recommended that at this time that the board take on some of the coordinator

responsibilities and see whether these tasks can be accomplished by board members in order to save money.

Task Delegation: Matt Meersman delegated Maria Mast to the task of updating the association website with FotSJR board meeting minutes/agendas and creating a membership report for Board meetings. Matt Meersman agreed to handle the FotSJR email account. Danielle Meersman offered to take on the responsibility of handling membership, including contacting non-email members through mailed letters. Rachel Smith will be assigned the responsibility of adding watershed related events to the website on a quarterly basis. Ray Leising requested that the board develop a newsletter committee to try to complete one newsletter and evaluate the efficiency of the board completing the task in the future. Melanie Stoughton offered to become the lead person on the FotSJR newsletter committee, with Rachel Smith assisting on newsletter development. Eldred Adams will continue to be the point person regarding the Annual Meeting logistics of reserving space and setting menu through Sturges-Young Auditorium. The board agreed that the winter newsletter should be talking about the Annual Meeting scheduled this spring. As of the October FotSJR board meeting, no fall newsletter will be going out to members. Maria Mast asked whether the committee tasked on creating the newsletter would also be responsible for other media related tasks. Dave Foerster suggested that there should be different sections within the media responsibilities broken apart and assigned to different people rather than assign the entire media/outreach to one committee. The board agreed that after these tasks have been completed over the next year that the decision to not hire a part time coordinator will be re-evaluated.

NEW BUSINESS

LOCAL MATCH COMMITMENTS-- Matt Meersman reviewed the local match commitments of the FotSJR to grants within the St. Joseph River Watershed. A handout was passed around to meeting attendees showing the breakdown by Grant Project Name, Grant Type and Source, Administrator, Status, Duration, Start Date, Grand Fund Amount, Local Match Amount, FotSJR Grant Amount, FotSJR Match Contributed To-Date, and FotSJR Match Description. The handout provided shows that very little match from the FotSJR has been recorded for any of the grants the association has committed to. Matt Meersman reminded the board that more attention should be focused on including articles in the FotSJR newsletter that relate to the grants that FotSJR has committed match to. Matt reviewed the large local match amount to the Prairie River project and where the association was at relating to their commitment. Jim Coury does attend all Prairie River meetings to provide match, but more match will be needed from others to help achieve the promised match. Matt's help with wetland prioritization should help significantly for that project. FotSJR will be adding a lot of match to the Wetland Partnership

Project through the parcel merging and map creation. Dave Foerster asked if there is a generic spreadsheet to record match. Matt referenced the Wetland Partnership Project Match Record Sheet as a sheet that can be used to record all match. Matt would like to have this local match recordkeeping accessible on the association website for members to log match, and to also have the data available for fundraising.

OTHER

- **Website Domain Renewal:** Currently, the FotSJR has two domain names. The association may have to pay more money than originally intended to get the domain name back. Through 1&1, the domain name was under Al Smith's name and there were difficulties in providing the needed information to show that Al Smith had passed away. Danielle Meersman is working on combining both websites into the same account. Danielle stated that the domain should be moved from 1&1 (the current web hosting site) to GoDaddy.com based on support services and costs
- **Watershed Stewardship Award:** Matt announced that the Watershed Stewardship Award has been hanging at the River Park Library in South Bend since early summer, and that everyone should be thinking of nominees for this year's award.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Watershed Management Plan Funding:** Dona Hunter announced Pigeon Creek has been funded. Dona also announced that the Fawn River proposal was funded through the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and that the project is currently working on a contract. The project will work in both Michigan and Indiana. The Fawn River grant has been funded through 205J funds, which do not require match. Matt Meersman asked that FotSJR be placed on the stakeholder committee list for future meetings.
- **Two Rivers Coalition Annual Meeting:** Dave Foerster announced that the Two Rivers Coalition will be hosting their annual meeting on December 12th. Tom Springer, who spoke at the FotSJR Annual Meeting will be speaking at this upcoming meeting. Matt Meersman and Marcy Colclough will also be speaking at this free event.
- **SWMLC Annual Meeting:** Jim Coury announced that the annual meeting is tonight at Henderson Castle in Kalamazoo. Jim discussed the topic of rail banking as corridor preservation and the issues surrounding the preservation of the railways. Michigan is the number one state for connected trailways.

NEXT MEETING –The next meeting will be held on Thursday, November 15th at the Three Rivers Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45 pm. Matt Meersman made the motion, will Maria Mast supporting.