

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 25, 2013 – 1:00pm**  
**Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Rachel Smith, Daragh Deegan, Jim Coury, Melanie Stoughton, Ray Leising, Maria Mast, Geoff Cripe, Ron Niezgodski
- **Watershed Council:** Don Stohler, Christiana Creek Coalition, Bill Courliss, Union Lake Com. Assoc.; Jeff Reece, IMP; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Marcy Colcough, SWMPC; Joe Schmees, IDEM; Karen Mackowiak, St. Joseph River Basin Commission; Bob Jones, LaGrange Co. SWCD; Chris Bauer, MDEQ; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Kayleen Hart, Steuben Co. SWCD; Lucas Gabbard, Hillsdale CD
- **Visitors:** Dallas Chester, GLAC & SWMLC; Jessica Luck, Hillsdale CD

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:00pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

**Minutes** of the March 2013 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by Ron Niezgodski and seconded by Maria Mast.

**Treasurers Report** was presented by Matt Meersman in the absence of Treasurer Danielle Meersman. Matt was pleased to report a small net profit for the year after several years of significant losses. A motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Maria Mast and seconded by Rachel Smith.

**Old Business**

**Wetland Partnership Project** – A quarterly meeting was held in the morning prior to the monthly FotSJR board meeting. Matt Meersman asked Melanie Stoughton to summarize the partnership project. The next areas for landowner outreach will be Cass County, the Elkhart River Watershed, Berrien County and northern St. Joseph County, IN. Don Stohler asked the group if there had been any success stories in regards to wetland restorations. Matt noted that 3 projects with USFWS resulted from the event in Howe, IN and a WRP project in the South Branch of the Paw Paw from the Van Buren Conservation District's outreach efforts. Geoff Cripe noted that he was working with a landowner in Ovid Township of Branch County. The next goal will be to work with local municipalities on land use planning.

**Membership Development and Fundraising** – Daragh Deegan announced to the group that a "Green Drinks" event would be held on May 8<sup>th</sup> in Elkhart. Daragh told the group that Green Drinks is a monthly informal meeting where some environmental minded group speaks for 10 minutes. These types of events are great networking opportunities. Matt, Geoff, and Daragh will be presenting at the Elkhart Green Drinks and continue to meet and discuss membership development opportunities.

**Greening the Bend Partner Support**- Ron Niezgodski reported to the group that he had heard the engineering study on the Century Center roof had come back with good results. To date, there has been no new information from Kathleen Petitjean. Danielle Meersman will continue to keep in contact with Petitjean to stay updated on their progress of becoming a non-profit.

## New Business

**Annual Meeting Follow-up** - The group unanimously agreed that the annual meeting was a great success. Matt thanked all of the Board members that helped make the evening happen. Marcy Colclough reiterated that it is never too early to begin thinking of speakers for next year's meeting.

## Other Items

- Matt reminded the group of the summer meeting schedule. The June 27<sup>th</sup> meeting will be held in Indiana. The location has yet to be determined. Karen Mackowiack will check with the parks department on using the Bonneville Mill Park. In case of rain, the Bristol Library may be scheduled as back up. As in years past, there will be no July meeting.
- Rachel Smith announced that the next edition of the newsletter has been started. Rachel requested photos from the annual meeting as well as photos of Dona Hunter winning the watershed stewardship award. There is currently no specific theme for the next newsletter. Marcy suggested highlighting the projects FotsJR has committed match to. Also, if anyone has events they would like to add to the FotsJR website, please email Rachel Smith!
- Geoff Cripe noted that there were a few people at the annual meeting that would like to connect to the watershed council and asked if it would be alright to include email addresses of board members on the website. Matt Meersman said that this would be a great opportunity to also include partnership agreements with these emails.

## Announcements

- Dave Foerster—Two Rivers Coalition has many upcoming workshops and events
  - SWMPC Climate Change Forum follow up meeting is scheduled for May 8<sup>th</sup> from 6-8pm in Benton Harbor
  - June 12: Fracking Forum in Lawrence
  - July 20<sup>th</sup>: Paw Paw Days Two Rivers Coalition needs volunteers to help serve drinks from 2 pm to 10 pm. Volunteers could also help check IDs at the gate, help with education, promote event in the newsletter, and have a display at the event.
  - July 21<sup>st</sup>: "Do the Maple Circle" canoe and kayak around Maple Lake
  - August: River Rescue 2013 with the Van Buren CD
- Don Stohler—Saturday, April 27<sup>th</sup>: Lower Christiana Creek Clean Up, starting at the well field.
- Marcy Colclough--IUSB "Green Town" approached the sustainable business forum. Planning meeting will be held on May 3<sup>rd</sup> in South Bend.
- Chris Bauer—A dam removal guidebook has been published by Huron Pines and is available electronically at [www.huronpines.org](http://www.huronpines.org)
- Karen Mackowiack—Karen announced the St. Joe River Basin Commission's symposium is scheduled for May 17<sup>th</sup>. The deadline to RSVP is May 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Lucas Gabbard—Lucas announced that the Hillsdale CD is planning a river cleanup before the Jonesville River Fest. A canoe and kayak race will be held during River Fest that starts at the headwaters of the river.

**Next Meeting** will be Thursday, May 23, 2013 at 1:00pm at the Three Rivers Public Library. Meeting adjourned at 2:25 pm.