

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan**  
**Thursday, April 28, 2011 – 1:00 p.m.**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Directors - Eldred Adams, Eric Kerney, Matt Meersman, Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Brian Musser, Dona Hunter, Danielle Meersman, Maria Schaefer, Ray Leising, Jim Coury
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Chris Bauer, MDNRE Water Bureau; Angie Brown, IDEM; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Bruce Campbell, Cass County Drain Commissioner; Jeff Wenzel, St. Joseph County Drain Commissioner
- Visitors – Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi; Bill Courliss, Union Lake Community Association; Rebecca Shank, Fabius Township Citizens Coalition; Pete Bennett, resident on the river; Randal Peart, McCoy Creek Restoration Committee; Joe Mitchell, River Tenders; Scott King, Friends of McCoy's Creek; Korine Bachleda, Earth Day in the Park; Tom Fehlner, Buchanan Watershed Advisory Committee

Matt Meersman called the meeting to order and asked for introductions. He explained the board and the advisory Watershed Council. All those present are invited to provide input to any item on the agenda, but when votes are taken, the vote needs to come from the directors only.

**Minutes of the March meeting** were approved on a motion made by Ray Leising and seconded by Daragh Deegan after two spelling corrections – recoded should have been recorded and plaque should have been plaque.

**Financial Statement** for April was distributed by Danielle Meersman. Current assets total \$54,327.24.

**Outreach Coordinator Report** – Leah Cooper did not have anything new to report for the month.

**Wetland Partnership Project** – Matt reported that the quarterly meeting of the steering committee had been held in the morning with good attendance and discussion. This grant project will study all the wetlands in the watershed both Indiana and Michigan to determine functions and provide outreach in the watershed. The data development portion of the project is between 35-40% completed and is scheduled to be completed in the first 12 to 18 months. Matt received a scholarship and attended a wetland conference in West Virginia. He also presented at the Steuben Co. SWCD, Branch Co. Expo and SW District of County Drain Commissioners.

**Annual Meeting Review** – The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Watershed Council Meeting held on March 14 had good attendance and a great speaker. Kevin Kincare made a wonderful presentation, making what could have been a dry topic, very interesting. He did a great job explaining a very scientific process with the movement of the glaciers, etc. With the donation from AEP and funds from the silent auction there was

actually a profit made on the meeting. Matt adjusted the terms of the three new board members due to miscalculation made at the March meeting. Ray Leising's term will expire in 2013 instead of 2012; with Brian Musser in 2014 instead of 2013; and Maria Schaefer in 2014 as well. This will allow for the potential of 5 board members changing per year.

**Pucker Street Dam Project** – Ken Crown, who is involved with a group interested in removing the dam on the Dowagiac River at Niles, emailed Matt and suggested FotSJR should become part owners of the dam with Trout Unlimited. Matt invited Ken to present a proposal to the Board, but informed him that it wasn't something the FotSJR would normally get involved in.

**Commemorative Stone Dedication Ceremony** – As everyone knows, Al Smith passed away a few weeks ago. Matt had the opportunity to meet with the family, including Al before he passed away. It was a very good visit and Matt told them about the dedication of a stone marker. Al was an ex-Marine and normally rather stoic, but he was very moved by the plans. He had been struggling with the thought that he had not left a legacy behind, but this brought home to him the importance of the role he has played in the organization. Family, along with Margaret, is very excited and they are planning to attend the dedication ceremony. Some of them will be flying in from quite a distance. Matt has met with the city engineer on site and has seen the stone. He has been struggling to get a proof of the plaque, but the size will be 9" x 12". The stone has one flat side, which will give a good place to set the plaque. The stone should be in place in a week or so. Matt will get in touch with Ron Niezgodski, Ruty Adams and Martin Franke about getting the plaque placed on the stone, once he has it. There is power available on site. River Network is also honoring Al as a national hero of the river at the National River Rally.

The dedication will take place at 3:00 p.m. on May 26. Matt will say a few words and would like to have Jim Coury and Rudy Kappe speak also. It would be nice to have anyone who is present to share memories of the river and stories about Al. Bruce Campbell will try to get elected officials there from both Indiana and Michigan. Karen Mackowiak could probably help with that. Someone should contact the Three Rivers Chamber of Commerce. The newspaper will be contacted for coverage. The stone will be covered and then Margaret can remove the covering. It was suggested having some flowers there and possibly a light. It was also suggested having something for everyone to take home, possibly a ribbon or a native plant. Dona will bring a portable PA system in case it is needed.

**McCoy Creek Watershed Project** – They are requesting support from FotSJR on their "Fish America" grant proposal. The project is to remove the dam and pond at Buchanan and create a small whitewater riffle within the creek channel. The project is being sponsored by City of Buchanan, Friends of McCoy Creek, Buchanan Preservation Society, Michigan DNRE, Fisheries Division and River Tenders, Inc. There had been some conflict going on between two groups, so a committee was formed to hash out the problem and create a comprehensive plan. This stream is a designated cold water trout stream with salmon and steelhead. Daragh Deegan has been working on the fish migration barrier inventory project with FotSJR and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. That project is prioritizing the removal of fish barriers and the dam on McCoy Creek in Buchanan will likely rank in the top ten. On a motion made by Ray

Leising and seconded by Ruddy Adams, the board approved Matt Meersman writing a letter of support for this project. Matt will include information on the fish barriers project in the letter.

**Other Items:**

- Chris Bauer distributed a flyer on paddle trip events on the Kalamazoo River this summer – Kanoes the Kazoo.
- Korine Bachleda distributed information about the Earth Day in the Park program on Friday, May 20, 2011 at Dr. T.K. Lawless Park. She was encouraging FotSJR to have a booth. Cost for the booth is \$10.00.
- Becky Shank reminded everyone to put the Three Rivers Water Festival on the 2<sup>nd</sup> week-end in June and encouraged the set up of a booth. She also was elected to the St. Joseph Conservation District board and is looking at what she can bring to the board as a resident of Fabius Township. They are looking at adjustments to the Fabius Township wetland ordinance. St. Joseph CD is looking at a county wide ordinance for wetland protection and also an ordinance on outdoor wood burners. City of Three Rivers is looking into banning them altogether. These two ordinances could be a model for both Michigan and Indiana.

Matt reminded everyone of the next board meeting and dedication on May 26, 2011 beginning at 1:00 p.m. here at the Three Rivers Library.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m. on a motion made by Dona Hunter and seconded by Ruddy Adams.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.