

Friend of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan
Thursday, May 26, 2011 – 1:00 p.m.

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **DIRECTORS:** Melanie Stoughton, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Maria Schaefer, Ray Leising, Ruddy Adams, Brian Musser, Ron Niezgodski, Geoff Cripe, Matt Meersman, Dona Hunter, Jim Coury
- **OUTREACH COORDINATOR:** Leah Cooper
- **WATERSHED COUNCIL:** Chris Bauer, MDNRE Water Bureau; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Karen Mackowiac, SJRBC; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; John Nelson, Klinger Lake Association; Bruce Campbell, Cass County WRC
- **VISITORS:** Karen Kappe, Nancy Carpenter, Berrien Conservation District; Kris Martin, SWMPC; Don Stohler, Christiana Creek Coalition; Becky Shank, Fabius Township Citizens Coalition & St. Joseph Conservation District

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. After introductions Matt briefly explained the order of business for the meeting. All comments and discussion from anyone present is welcome, but when it comes to a final vote on business items of the agenda, board members only can vote.

Minutes of the April meeting were approved on a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Ron Niezgodski.

Treasurer's Report was distributed by Treasurer Danielle Meersman. \$400 had been received in income, including contributions/membership and interest. The expense was for the contract with Leah Cooper. This shows a net loss for the year of \$4,800. Danielle said the CD comes due next month. She would recommend a 12 month CD. On a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Ron Niezgodski, Danielle was instructed to renew the CD. Question was raised about the interest rate, which is ½% right now. Dave Forester asked if there was any anticipated income out there and the answer was no in the short term. Matt stated there was not any income shown from the EPA grant, but there should be some reimbursement money coming soon. Ruddy said that a savings bank in Sturgis was offering ¼% interest on a checking account. Rudy Kappe moved to approve the treasurer's report; motion seconded by Melanie Stoughton; motion carried.

Outreach Coordinator Report – Leah has been working on the spring newsletter and is waiting on Matt and the review committee and then it will be sent to the printer. The focus of this issue is flooding. Matt is re-working an article with information from a presentation at the St. Joe River Symposium sponsored by the St. Joseph River Basin Commission. Matt also thanked Karen and the Commission for another great symposium.

Wetland Partnership Project – Matt quickly reviewed the purpose of the EPA grant for wetland prioritization and outreach. Matt participated in a webcast & phone call with the Center for Watershed Protection to learn more about WARPT – Wetlands-at-Risk Protection Tool. There is some crossover between the Wetland Partnership project methodology and WARPT, but there are also differences. Matt recently gave two presentations about the project. He attended the Waverly Township Planning

Commission meeting in Van Buren County showing them maps, etc. Marcy provided language and techniques for updating the master plan and zoning ordinances. Matt also attended the Buchanan Lions Club meeting at the invitation of Rudy Kappe to update them on the wetland assessment program. The Lions Club members are volunteering to be a liaison with Bertrand Township for presentations. Rudy thanked Matt for a good presentation.

In the McCoy's Creek watershed 80% of the wetlands are still there due in part to the 5 well heads in the area that need to be protected.

Chris Bauer asked if the functional assessment had been completed for Portage River. Matt thinks that parts of it might be done. He and Chris can look at the map after the meeting.

The next meeting of the Wetland Partnership Committee is scheduled for August 25, 2011 at 10:15 a.m. at the library in Three Rivers.

Update on McCoy's Creek Watershed Project – Matt send a letter of support for the Fish America grant they are applying for. He incorporated some of the information from the fish migration study and other activities going on in the watershed. Grant Poole with the Pokagon Band of Potawatomi had sent Matt some additional information related to the letter of support.

Fish Passage Barrier Inventory Project Workshop – The RC&Ds have always been their own 501c3 entity with funding supplied by USDA, NRCS. That funding has been pulled. Some of the RC&Ds have been more active than others and some of them will survive while others may not. The Potawatomi RC&D has been good partner with the Fish Passage Barrier project. Jim Coury reported that they are looking for an executive director. As a requirement of the grant, a workshop needs to be held with FotSJR receiving \$2,500 in compensation. So far FotSJR has contributed \$4,000 of the \$5,000 in local match we committed. No definite date has been set, but probably will be done sometime in September and coordinated with a workshop that Marcy is doing. Marcy is going to be doing a workshop/field day on culvert removal/replacement and dam removal. This will be a daylong event with the target audience being road commissioners, drain commissioners, surveyors, conservation districts, etc. who might be receptive to installing fish friendly road stream crossings. Jeff Reece suggested looking into holding two workshops, one in Michigan where the main focus and interest is, with a mini-workshop in Indiana. Someone needs to talk with Daragh Deegan about the location of some projects in Indiana. Neil Ledet, DNR, might be another person to involve in Indiana. Jeff Reece mentioned Jeff Taylor, Elkhart County Engineer, as another source of information. Indiana could benefit from this type of workshop, especially in the Elkhart/South Bend area due to heavy development. The question was asked about including DOT in both Michigan and Indiana in this workshop. Also someone was wondering if it would be technical enough to offer CEC. Those two things will be looked into.

John Nelson asked about a location map that shows all the dams in the watershed. Matt says there is a map, but it is not very good. Due to restrictions with Homeland Security the locations are pretty obscure, even though they are marked on the map. After the project is complete there may be a better set of maps, but not sure at this point how much will be made public.

More information on the workshop will be provided at the next board meeting.

Smith Stone Dedication Ceremony – Margaret Smith and her family will be there at 3:00 p.m. Also members of the press have been invited to attend. A huge thank you goes to the Barton Family for

donating the stone and actually transporting it to the site. Matt invited everyone at the meeting to attend the dedication ceremony immediately following this meeting.

Other Items from the Board:

- Don Stohler with Christiana Creek Coalition reported they are moving ahead with a law firm to set up their organization and obtain their 501c3 status. The bridge replacement and crossing at Redfield Rd. is progressing, thanks to the donation of land by an adjacent landowner for the installation of a launch site. They will be holding a clean up this summer on July 16 with a cook-out.
- Enviro-Fest in Elkhart is coming up. It might be a good place for a booth. It will be held at Well Field on July 8. Contact Tim Cataldo for more information.
- Jim Coury asked about progress with the Prairie River project in Branch County. The grant has been awarded, but the contract has not been finalized as yet.
- Rutty Adams asked about pictures for this afternoon's dedication. Leah will get some and get them on the web site.

Items from Watershed Council Members:

- Dave Forester with Two Rivers Coalition invited everyone to a presentation by Kevin Haight on his paddling trip from Paw Paw to Benton Harbor. It is scheduled for June 8 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. in the old high school in downtown Paw Paw.
- Jeff Reece commented on a newspaper article concerning closing the fish ladders at Berrien Springs and Buchanan. I&M owns them and they are the only ones who can make the decision to close them.
- Jim Coury asked Chris Bauer if there was any word on the next round of 319 proposals. Chris stated they have not heard anything about what proposals were awarded grants from the last round. The request for new proposals should be coming out soon.
- Leah Cooper asked about the June 23 meeting. It will be held at Par Gil Natural Resources Learning Center in LaGrange County. Dona gave the physical address as 2335 N – SR 9, LaGrange.
- Conservation District in St. Joseph County has cleaned a pathway for paddling in several streams and will be continuing their clean-up in August. Amy DeShon is working on a 3 year grant for the installation of handicap ramps along the river. Becky Shank has information about the clean-up.

Meeting was adjourned on a motion by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Melanie Stoughton.

Dedication Ceremony – After the meeting about 25 people attended a very moving dedication ceremony for Al and Margaret Smith to recognize all of the passion and hard work they have displayed throughout the years to protect the St. Joseph River. It was especially inspiring, as Al just recently passed away. Jim Coury, Rudy Kappe, Marcy Colclough, Chris Bauer, Becky Shank, and Matt Meersman shared memories of the river and experiences with Al and Margaret. Margaret gave a very heartfelt thank you to those who are continuing the efforts to improve the water quality of the river. The stone will provide a beautiful setting to reflect about the St. Joseph River and its heritage.

Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.