

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 15, 2012—1:00pm
Three Rivers Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Eldred Adams, Melanie Stoughton, Matt Meersman, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Maria Mast
- Watershed Council: Jeff Reece, IMP; Don Stohler, Christiana Creek Coalition; Dona Hunter, SNRT; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Tracy Bronson: Calhoun Conservation District; Bob Jones, LaGrange SWCD; Jen Miller, St. Joseph County (MI) CD; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC

MINUTES of the October meeting were approved on a motion made by Jim Coury and seconded by Eldred Adams.

TREASURER'S REPORT—Matt Meersman informed the board of behalf of treasurer, Danielle Meersman, that there was no new activity during the month of October, so a treasurer's report was not generated. Assets remain the same from the September treasurer's report.

OLD BUSINESS

WETLAND PARTNERSHIP PROJECT—Geoff Cripe described the wetland project briefly to the meeting attendees. The third outreach session has been completed as of Wednesday, November 14th. These sessions have been targeting private landowners with highly significant wetland areas based on their functionality. Matt Meersman updated the board and watershed council members on the merging of parcel data for the watershed. There will be a meeting between Matt and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality on Wednesday, December 4th to discuss the enhancement of the merged data to include the functional information. For those board members who are currently finishing their parcel merging, Matt requested a completion date of December 3rd. The overall goal with the parcel data is to have the entire watershed merged by the next wetland partnership quarterly meeting, rescheduled to December 20th. Dona Hunter requested a display that would highlight the entire wetland partnership project to be used for future events. Marcy Colclough offered to help provide maps. Daragh Deegan suggested that a smaller electronic version of display materials be provided for use on the FotSJR website.

MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT/FUNDRAISING—Geoff Cripe did research and found that within the charitable giving arena, 40% of donations are to religious organizations, 15% are to education, 15% to private organizations, and 10% to human services. With the remaining 20% only 2% is for the environment, (over 1% is for animal protection). Geoff looked at the idea of a “Clean Water Campaign”, mirrored like other “One Percent” campaigns. Businesses use this campaign as a point of sale for consumers donating 1% or a \$1.00 of their purchase towards a group or cause. There are a lot of resources available to help businesses to help with this concept. A mission statement could be created to help partner with these businesses to address the message of the FotSJR. Donors today want to see an impact, and see their money going to something directly “on the ground”. Target businesses and utilities to have the option of donating a month’s percentage of profits or a percentage of a utility bill to the group. Jeff Reece recommended talking with Indiana Michigan Power about the idea this type of campaign in their billing system. Geoff Cripe will also be meeting and working with owners from the Boundary Waters cafes in Three Rivers, Vicksburg and Sturgis on a possible point of sale program with their business. The board should think of others who can be approached to discuss the idea of a Clean Water Campaign. Matt Meersman had a question regarding the technical assistance towards a concept, especially regarding the utilities portion of the campaign ideas. Jeff Reece suggested speaking with Diane Fitzgerald, who has known the Smith’s for a long time, supports the mission of the FotSJR, and who also works within the utilities companies.

Matt Meersman liked the idea of a Point of Sale campaign that would be asking for a donation while someone is already spending money. The board could possibly look at multiple businesses that may choose to donate that amount towards the FotSJR. The money could then be put aside as “grant funds” that can go to a Conservation District that needs money to remain open, and other organizations that are looking at completing conservation projects. The FotSJR would then be tasked with developing a committee that would oversee the money other organizations would then compete for. This idea would help the FotSJR complete their mission of being a resource other groups go to help fund their own projects. Tracy Bronson suggested the idea of requiring membership with the FotSJR in order to be eligible for these grants. A discussion between board members on whether or not to require membership for these grant applications led to some questions comparing increasing our membership (self-serving) versus increasing our watershed council network by giving.

Administration of grant funds and accountability of these groups once they received funding were to two large questions raised by the group that would be continued discussion at future meetings. Matt Meersman also reminded the group of advice given at the October meeting by Sam Adams that while some people may have great connections, it may not be *that* person who should be the one that approaches the potential supporter. Educational institutions and

hospitals seem to be the largest employers in the watershed, and should potentially be approached, rather than focusing on other private companies, (i.e. Whirlpool).

Affiliate memberships were discussed as a way to increase the membership, by allowing other groups to join, with a grace period to become full members at a later date.

NEW BUSINESS

ANNUAL MEETING PLANNING-- Nominations for the Watershed Stewardship Award need to be considered in the next couple of months. The deadline for nominations is the end of January. The information for this award can be viewed at our website. Looking to hold the Annual Meeting in March at the Sturges-Young Auditorium, the board began looking at dates. Marcy Colclough looked at Mondays and March 18th and March 25th were two possibilities. At this point, Matt would like to check with Sturges-Young Auditorium to see if either of those two days would work. Eldred Adams will be contacting the auditorium to check on these dates.

Discussion on a possible speaker for the annual meeting began. Marcy Colclough added the idea of using the newsletter as the vehicle to deliver the yearlong accomplishments of the group instead of having a speaker present these achievements during an annual meeting. Jim Coury suggested the idea of Disaster Management as a potential topic for a keynote speaker. With the recent oil spill along the Kalamazoo River, and other spills in the news, the topic could be very pertinent to the watershed. Another idea also proposed was to work with the two tribal nations in the watershed on natural resources and/or history from a tribal perspective, and how they are incorporating their history into the developments that are ongoing within their reservation. Marcy suggested a tribal cultural resources speaker to possibly speak on behalf of their tribe. Matt Meersman will contact Eric Kerney and Amy Boetcher from the Nottawaseppi Huron Band and Mark Parrish and Grant Poole from the Pokagon Band to discuss speaking opportunities for our annual meeting.

Other speaker ideas were discussed by the board. Dave Forester mentioned that the Two Rivers Coalition had great turnout from Peter Sinclair Climate Change. Matt Meersman had a grand idea of Eric Eckel (Water Words that Work) as a potential speaker that would be a great presenter, but potentially very costly. Matt will pursue this out of curiosity. Jim Coury brought up the potential of bringing Dave Dempsy to Michigan to speak, and Matt will also look into Dave as a possibility.

WEBSITE UPDATE—Our FotSJR.org site which was administered by 1&1 internet is down due to a supposed balance of \$10.00, which an invoice had never been received. Danielle Meersman

has been furiously working on moving the website domain name to GoDaddy. In the meantime, the website can be accessed at www.fotsjr.org.wildapricot to reach the site.

DIVISION OF TASKS/NEWSLETTER—Matt Meersman would like a newsletter developed and sent out by the end of January. The main topic could possibly be to simply highlight what good things are going on in the watershed, as well as information about the upcoming annual meeting. Melanie Stoughton asked Matt about a template that could be sent to help create the newsletter. Dave Foerster asked about newsletter size, and Matt stated that it did not have to be the same number of pages but that it would be interesting to see where we as a board of volunteers can get the newsletter. We may have to reduce the quantity to maintain the quality now that it is a group of volunteer board members taking on the newsletter.

DIVISION OF TASKS/ANNUAL MEETING—Daragh Deegan and Maria Mast will work with Matt Meersman for this year's annual meeting. Another thing to manage during the annual meeting will be the Silent Auction. Danielle was key in managing the auction, and will be available to help during the annual meeting with technicalities. Melanie Stoughton offered to help with Silent Auction Donations and logistics. Geoff Cripe also raised the issue of board member expiration dates and elections. Matt Meersman requested that not only the board member expiration dates be available, but the designated term they are serving as well to make sure board members get shuffled on and off the board as stated in our bylaws. Geoff Cripe will spearhead the organization of the election committee. Melanie Stoughton will be the only board member who is an officer that is up for re-election this year.

OTHER

- Tracy Bronson, Calhoun Conservation District has been in contact with Farm Service Agency regarding the potential to bring the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) to the St. Joseph River Watershed. This program would be for production ground that would not be put into cropland, but reserved and enhanced for conservation practices. Tracy has spoken with Michigan FSA to get the program in the watershed. Currently in Michigan the program is in the River Raisin, Saginaw Bay and Macatawa. These would be enhanced payments on conservation projects, with an incentive payment to help people choose to enroll. In order to get the program, 20% of what the Farm Bill program would put in (which could be time from the FotSJR). Would like to also work with Indiana Departments as well as Michigan Department of Agriculture. Matt Meersman helped explain the process of applying for CREP, which is similar in how the FotSJR partnered with the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) project that Tracy Bronson secured in 2010. Tracy approached the group on finding key political players that may be leaders in helping support CREP in the St. Joseph River Watershed. Dona Hunter explained the method Indiana uses to identify

CREP areas, where historically local agencies have not been given the opportunity to provide input in areas. Michigan Farm Service Agency and Indiana Farm Service Agency will be working together in the near future to discuss this opportunity. As far as match given by the FotSJR group for this potential project, our website could highlight the program opportunities. Work done through the Wetland Partnership Project could also be used as match to help in prioritizing areas that would be ideal for CREP practices. Overall the board would like to be involved in the project.

- Dave Foerster of the Two Rivers Coalition announced the news release that will be distributed regarding their upcoming annual meeting. Tom Springer will be speaking.
- Tracy Bronson announced to the group that PBS will be airing a two night program on the Dust Bowl this upcoming Sunday and Monday.

NEXT MEETING –The next meeting will be held on Thursday, December 20th at the Three Rivers Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 2:45pm.