

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 20, 2014 – 1:00pm
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors: Matt Meersman, Eric Kerney, Daragh Deegan, Jeff Wenzel, Bob Jones, Zach Martin, John Law
- Watershed Council: Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Don Stohler, Christiana Creek Coalition; Jeremy Reiman, SJRBC; Kathy Worst, Branch County CD; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Chris Bauer, MDEQ; Carolyn Grace, St. Joseph County MI, CD; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power
- Visitors: Jim Haddock, Acres Land Trust

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:05pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions. Jeff Reece reminded the group that he will be retiring from Indiana Michigan Power in March, 2015.

Minutes of the October, 2014 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by John Law and, a second by Jeff Wenzel. Matt thanked Bob Jones for his help with recording minutes from recent meetings in the absence of Melanie Stoughton.

Treasurers Report was presented by Matt Meersman in the absence of Treasurer Danielle Meersman. Matt highlighted a very large contribution of \$1,500 from AEP for the 2015 Annual Meeting. The Treasurer's Report was approved with a motion by Bob Jones and a second by John Law.

Old Business

Wetland Partnership Project – The last meeting of the Wetlands Partnership was held in the morning prior to the current meeting. Matt indicated that there are plans to hold 2 more outreach events for the project. One event will target GIS specialists within the watershed to show them how to use the data. This meeting may be held in conjunction with National Wetlands Month in 2015. The other meeting will be held on the Michigan side of the watershed and will have a similar format to the meeting that was held in the Baugo Creek Watershed in Indiana, where resource professionals and other government officials were targeted. Matt said that although the project is coming to a close, project information would continue to be available on the FotSJR website. Matt also discussed a fact sheet that Marcy put together for the project describing project accomplishments including the number of wetlands protected and restored and the amount of people reached as a result of the project.

Clean Water Campaign – There was no discussion held on this topic.

New Business

Portage River Dam Removal Support – Matt updated the group on the FotSJR's support of a grant application submitted by St. Joseph County, MI CD to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to remove a dam on the Portage River. Prior to the meeting, the Board voted through email to support the grant application. Carolyn Grace, the administrator of the CD discussed the project and thanked the FotSJR for their support.

Annual Meeting Planning – Discussion regarding the Annual Meeting occurred. The meeting will be held on Friday March, 20 2015 at the Sturgis Young Auditorium. Jim Patchett with Conservation Design Forum will be the guest speaker and will present information on urban issues. Matt mentioned that although there are no current board vacancies there are some terms expiring for current board members, and a board nominating committee would need to be formed to determine if board members with expiring terms wished to continue. Daragh Deegan and Bob Jones agreed to serve on the committee. Jeff Wenzel suggested that it might be a good idea to start developing information material for the Annual Meeting and agreed to develop a flyer for the meeting. Matt reminded the group of the Annual Watershed Stewardship Award that will be presented at the Annual Meeting and suggested that folks start thinking about potential nominations.

Matt also discussed the silent auctions and called on those in attendance to help gather items for the silent auction. The following items were discussed:

- John Law indicated that he would pursue the guided fishing trip that he was able to get last year. He also agreed to work on a box of fishing flies as he has done in the past.
- Daragh said he would try to secure a rain barrel, and Matt said that he could ask a local artist to paint it.
- Don Stohler said that he could pursue paintings from the Center for Hospice, request items from Iechyd Da Brewing Company in Elkhart, and request items from South Bend Chocolate Company.
- Jeremy Reiman said that he would pursue sporting event tickets for Notre Dame.
- Jeff Wenzel said that he would pursue items from Bells Brewery.
- Matt said he would pursue items with some of the other local breweries he is connected with.

Other Items

Kathy Worst with Branch County CD announced a grant that she is currently applying for in collaboration with several other Counties. The application is for a Cooperative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA) grant for \$500,000 to combat invasive species. The grant application will have a focus on outreach related to both aquatic and terrestrial invasive plant species. Funds will also be used to do some mapping and establish “strike teams”. Kathy asked if the FotSJR would be willing to provide a partnership letter supporting the project and some in-kind match. The grant application calls for a 10% match. Matt suggested a potential in-kind match of \$1,000 through outreach and technical assistance, which was formally approved by the board with a motion by John Law and a second by Daragh Deegan.

Jeff Reece requested that the FotSJR include an item on the January meeting agenda related to Indiana Michigan Power’s aquatic invasive species projects. Jeff indicated that AEP Principle Environmental Specialist, John Magalski, would be on hand at the January meeting to discuss these projects. Jeff said that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) is requiring that I&M perform eradication projects for purple loosestrife and Eurasian milfoil in several impoundments along the river. They are considering using biological controls, including the Galerucella beetles for the purple loosestrife. A brief discussion followed Jeff’s announcement with several suggesting a connection and potential partnership with Kathy Worst’s invasive species grant.

Don Stohler announced that the Christiana Creek Coalition’s President, Eric Zell, has moved from the area and is no longer serving as President. Don indicated that the CCC has not been very active and is

need of motivated people. Jeremy Reiman agreed to meet with Don and others from the CCC to see if he could assist their organization.

Matt briefly mentioned an email that has been circulating from FEMA regarding "Discovery Webinars" they would be holding. Nobody in the group had a good understanding of what these webinars are about.

Matt mentioned that the Michigan Nature Association (MNA) is interested in getting more involved with the Friends of the St. Joe River. He and Marcy met with the Executive Director and one of their board members on November 4th to discuss potential collaboration. Marcy handed out some information distributed by the MNA organization.

Chris Bauer mentioned that MDEQ is in the process of reviewing 319 grant proposals. She mentioned that MDEQ has received several proposals from parts of the St. Joseph River Watershed.

Marcy announced that the Two Rivers Coalition would be holding its annual meeting on December 10th at 7:00pm. Matt stated that he was planning to bring the FotSJR display. The guest speaker for the event is Peter Bane, who will be discussing permaculture.

Kathy Worst thanked the FotSJR for assisting with the Prairie River Watershed Management Plan. She indicated that the WMP recently received CMI and EPA approval.

Matt announced that the recently elected Ontwa Township Board voted to cancel their NPDES Permit application to the MDEQ. Daragh mentioned that he had heard that the permit application has not been officially cancelled because it was a joint application between Ontwa Township and Cass County, although that was essentially just a technicality.

Daragh asked if anyone was able to attend the recent meeting held by stakeholders in the Bowman Creek Watershed in South Bend. Jeremy Reiman said that he attended the meeting, but he said that he did not have anything significant to report. He mentioned that the project is being driven by Notre Dame.

Next Meeting

December 18th, 1:00pm at the Three Rivers Public Library

Meeting adjourned at 3:00 pm