

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 24, 2012 – 1:00pm**  
**Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, MI**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Rachel Smith, Eric Kerney, Daragh Deegan, Bruce Barton, Eldred Adams, Melanie Stoughton, Brian Musser, Ray Leising, Maria Mast, Geoff Cripe
- **Watershed Council:** Bill Courliss, Union Lake Com. Assoc.; Jeff Reece, IMP; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Jen Miller, St. Joseph County CD; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Joe Parman, Van Buren Drain Comm.; Mandy Courtright, Steuben CWCD
- **Visitors:** Roxanne Barton, Jared Foster-Native Connections, Francisco Ollervides-River Network, Joe VonWahlde-CardnoJFNew/Two Rivers Coalition, Scott Fetters-USFWS, Brett Riser-Calhoun CD

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

**Minutes** of the December 2012 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by Ray Leising and second by Maria Mast.

**Treasurers Report** was presented by Matt Meersman in the absence of Treasurer Danielle Meersman. Matt detailed several expenses that occurred since the December 2012 meeting including a fee for renewing the FotSJR P.O. Box, expenses for the website, and fees from the post office for returned newsletters. Matt also noted that a lot of account activity surrounding the Wetland Partnership grant occurred within the last month.

**Old Business**

**Wetland Partnership Project** – Daragh provided a comprehensive description of the project goals and methods. Matt gave a summary of project activities that occurred since the last meeting: the grant Quarterly Report was submitted to the EPA, SWMLC was reimbursed for their assistance with outreach activities, SWMPC was reimbursed for assistance with grant reporting activities, and Leah Cooper was reimbursed for website maintenance costs. Matt said that he and Rachel Smith continue to work on incorporating the Wetlands Partnership Project into the Prairie River project. Matt also provided an update on outreach activities: 1) Marcy Colclough gave a presentation of the Wetlands Partnership Project at the Calhoun Conservation District Annual Meeting. Marcy indicated that it was a successful presentation drawing a lot of attention and questions from the audience; 2) Matt and Marcy also gave a presentation to the Michiana Sanitarians; 3) Hillsdale Conservation District has requested a presentation from the Friends; 4) Matt and Geoff Cripe are teaming with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide two outreach presentations for the Paw Paw and Black Rivers on Jan. 31 (Benton Harbor @ 3:00 pm and South Haven @ 7:00 pm).

**Membership Development and Fundraising** – Matt reviewed the AEP Meeting with the board regarding a Point of Sale program that could be developed with municipalities. There is a relationship there to promote a clean water donation option that the board would like to use existing marketing from AEP to promote our point of sale program. Matt also discussed contacting wastewater municipalities as well,

and the idea of approaching local municipalities that handle location specific billing rather than going through a large corporation. Daragh announced that the City of Elkhart and South Bend are working on the removing of CSO's in a twenty year project that perhaps FotSJR could add this Point of Sale program into those plans. Geoff updated the group that he had emailed some of the members regarding businesses that board members were willing to contact. Geoff has one appointment with Boundary Waters Cafe in February to discuss. Eldred, Jen and Daragh were all listed as people who had businesses in mind that they could approach for participation in the Point of Sale Program.

**Annual Meeting Planning** – Matt announced that there is one more board meeting before the March 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting. At the last meeting, the theme was still unknown, but ideas were discussed. Marcy and Matt met with Andy Jackson of the Pokagon band, and discussed the opportunity for the tribe to speak about water quality from a tribal cultural perspective. Matt stated that the presentation by Andy and other Potawatomi Grandmothers will include discussion of their tribal “Water Walk”. The “Water Life” movie highlights the woman who started such a water walk around the Great Lakes that tribes in the region have participated in. The presentation at the annual meeting will include drumming and ceremonial songs. The title for the program is yet to be determined, but will be chosen in time for the newsletter that will be going out in February. Matt will have this information to the newsletter committee by the end of the month.

Melanie Stoughton reported the progress of the Silent Auction. To date, Melanie has created a letter that can be handed out to local businesses and other groups that may be willing to donate items for. Melanie passed out the sample letter, and let other board members and watershed council members know that help bringing in auction items from across the watershed would be greatly appreciated. Matt mentioned that personally contacting prospective auction donators would be best based on the timeframe we are looking at between now and the annual meeting. Matt also asked the board and council to recall what items were popular in the past and what might be obtained again this year. The group brainstormed some ideas for prospective donors. Matt offered to contact a fly fishing guide who could do a tour within the St. Joseph River, and will also contact some wineries and breweries within the watershed. Geoff Cripe offered to contact Fenn Valley winery as well. Marcy asked what the turnaround time between getting auction items in and valuing the items should be to ensure enough time to get the information from each donor. Melanie Stoughton asked that all items be finalized with valued cost by Monday, March 4<sup>th</sup>. Matt will also provide Melanie with a FotSJR letterhead for the auction letter as soon as possible.

Eldred noted that Liquid Therapy in Three Rivers may be a great business to request a donation from for a rental certificate. Matt offered to contact Karen and Ernie. Brian Musser was asked to contact Mongo canoe livery and the local winery in his area. Matt informed the group that items, such as the kayaks last year, could be donated at cost, and if nobody bid on the item, it would be returned. John Nelson suggested a golf package as an item. Marcy Colclough suggested native plants, and asked Jared Foster of Native Connections what may be available through them. Jared Foster suggested artwork from local artists, and let the group know that Amelia Hanson is a local artist that does nature themed artwork. Matt let the group know that it is the responsibility of the donor/artist to value their item.

Geoff and Daragh reviewed the progress of the nomination committee. There are four board members who have expiring terms (Bruce Barton, Melanie Stoughton, Jim Coury and Ray Leising). All four members were interested in running again for another term. Daragh and Geoff have to contact Jim Coury yet to finalize his interest in running for re-election. Matt reviewed the bylaws and announced that these board members who are up for re-election will be the first who fall under the new bylaw of

being term limited. This brought up the need for thinking about board recruitment over the next couple of years. Ray Leising is currently the exception because he is filling a board term, and will have another opportunity to serve another full term if he is re-elected in 2013. Matt stressed that the next couple of years are critical to get new people to attend the meetings to help gain awareness and interest in the group, and possibly running for a board position. Matt let the group know that there is no special requirement for people interested in running for the board other than being interested in water quality. Watershed council members were encouraged to consider running on the board. Matt stated that Geoff and Daragh are the people to contact for board interest. All fifteen board seats are currently full, but Matt encourages anyone interested to consider running.

Brian Musser announced to the group that due to his change in employment from the Conservation District to the Natural Resource Conservation Service, he is no longer allowed to be a voting member of the group, but is available to attend meetings. Matt requested that Brian submit a formal letter of resignation for the remainder of his term to the board. The board will then appoint someone to fill in for the remainder of his term.

Geoff Cripe reviewed last year's PR Folder for the annual meeting, and asked any partners interested in promoting their projects submit a bulleted list summarizing their accomplishments. For annual meeting promotion, the event will be highlighted in the upcoming Prairie River Watershed Newsletter. Matt will provide Rachel with a press release by the end of January to promote the annual meeting. For those on the annual meeting planning committee (Daragh and Matt), there is a Google Document available to use as a checklist for the planning process.

### **Old Business**

**St. JoeRiver.net Website Renewal** – Matt stated the two websites (fotsjr.org and stjoeiver.net) are now managed through GoDaddy.

### **New Business**

**Watershed Stewardship Award**—Matt passed out the packet of nominees to board members for this year's award. Board members will have until the February 28<sup>th</sup> board meeting to decide. If a board member is unable to attend the February meeting Matt asked that those members vote via email to Matt. More information regarding the award is available on the website if board members need to review the specifics of the award. This year's nomination forms also have the nominator's name listed, and board members are encouraged to contact the nominators for more information if they are having a difficult time choosing.

### **Other Items**

- **Jen Miller**—STJCCD will be submitting a grant with National Fish and Wildlife Federation February 7<sup>th</sup>. FotSJR did approve a letter of support for \$1000.00
- **Scott Fetters**—The USFWS announced that Northeast Indiana in partnership with Ducks Unlimited is applying for a \$1 million NAWCA grant to restore 1000 acres of wetland. USFWS has begun the process quite early, as the deadline is not until July. Currently Scott is requesting the FotSJR to join the partnership as a supporter with in-kind match. For a large NAWCA grant, approximately \$2 million to \$3 million. Down the road, there may be further requests for other

time or a monetary donation towards the project. This application is targeting NE Indiana because of restoration potential. Land purchased for protection with non federal dollars starting January 1 2011 through July 2013 will be a large portion of match dollars. Currently, \$2.2 million in match has been obtained, with a goal to reach \$3 million by March. There is also an Indiana Bicentennial Nature Trust that will hopefully leverage other groups to donate money. The application requires partnerships between state and local agencies, non-profit organizations and privately funded organizations, and participation from the FotSJR is greatly desired. Matt raised the possibility of using the data created through the Wetland Partnership Project as match to help assist their efforts. Scott will contact the NAWCA board to see where this kind of match would fall under. If awarded the grant, Ducks Unlimited would administer the grant.

**Maria Mast motioned for FotSJR to draft a letter of support for time for this NAWCA grant, with the intention to provide further support at a later date if appropriate. Geoff Cripe seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.**

- **Brian Musser**—Brian announced that Stueben Co. was awarded 319 funds to update the Pigeon River Watershed. The project started January 17<sup>th</sup>. Brian also informed the group that the Fawn River Planning Grant was awarded to LaGrange County. This grant is under 205J funds through the EPA, and will require less match than a traditional 319 Clean Water Act. This project will be contracted through Dave at SNRT. There will be an effort to have a stakeholder meeting in both states this spring.

#### **Announcements**

- **Event Display** – Rachel Smith has updated the display and it is available for use. Matt Meersman will take it for his upcoming event on January 31<sup>st</sup>.
- **Brett Riser**—Brett can provide anyone interested with the Portage River/Little Portage Creek planning project information following the meeting. The next steering committee meeting is scheduled for March 12<sup>th</sup> in Athens. Matt asked to be added to the steering committee list as FotSJR has committed match. Matt will be unable to attend the upcoming meeting. Melanie Stoughton will check and find out if she can attend as a board member to help meet FotSJR local match commitments.
- **John Nelson**—John continues to promote the ConserveMIWaters program educating people on statewide river cleanup events. Matt suggested that John contact Lucas Gabbard at the Hillsdale Conservation District on river cleanup efforts within that area of the watershed.

**Next Meeting** will be Thursday, February 28, 2013 at 1:00pm at the Three Rivers Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.