

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association, Inc.**  
**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan**  
**Thursday, April 22, 2010**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Jim Coury, Daragh Deegan, Dona Hunter, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton
- Outreach Coordinator – Leah Cooper
- Watershed Council Members – Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power; Dave Forester, Two Rivers Coalition; Jeffrey Wenzel, St. Joseph County (MI) Drain Commission
- Gene Lightner, Elkhart River Alliance; Ray Leising; Roxanne Barton

Everyone present introduced themselves, since there were several new people in attendance. Amy Boetcher and Geoff Cripe were not in attendance due to Earth Day related events.

**Minutes** of the March board meeting were approved on a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Danielle Meersman.

**Treasurer's Report** was presented by Treasurer, Danielle Meersman. Matt Meersman made a motion to approve the treasurer's report; seconded by Rudy Kappe; and approved. Danielle reported that the CD is due on May 17. The interest rate was 2%, but will be less than ½% now. After a discussion about the need for some additional funds for grant work coming up, Rudy Kappe made a motion to have the treasurer put \$25,000 in a six month CD with the remainder in the checking account; seconded by Daragh Deegan; and approved.

**Outreach Coordinator's Report – Leah Cooper:**

- Leah has received several positive comments on the annual meeting, including the good turn out and the name badges. She is continuing to receive memberships and donations.
- At the end of March Leah presented information on FotSJR to the Elkhart Conservation Club formed in the 1930s. They own 25 acres including 17 acres of wetlands with a potential for wetland enhancement along Cobus Creek. They are looking for a potential partnership and assistance with FotSJR to write and administer a grant.
- Leah talked with Gene Lightner about partnering with Elkhart River Alliance on five potential wetland restoration sites. She suggested some federal funding options.
- She encouraged everyone to register for the landscaping workshop sponsored by SWMPC. There are only 10 people registered so far.
- Matt, Marcy and Leah have applied for a Freshwater Futures Grant for \$5,500 for a wetland coalition and media campaign in conjunction with the wetland grant. There has already been positive feedback and should hear whether it was awarded during the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week in May.
- The May newsletter will have a wetland focus. It needs to be proofed and printed. Leah hopes to have it out by the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> week in May. The proof reading team is made up of Chris, Angie and Amy.
- Dave Forester suggested looking into the River Network Grant funds to help supplement projects.

**Annual Meeting Summary** – Dona had completed a summary of the meeting, which focused on Matt’s report of activities for the past year. Matt thought the change in the format was well received, allowing more time for dinner and networking. Rudy Kappe was impressed with the presentation on wetlands, which provided a lot of good historical data. Everyone appreciated the donation made by Eldred Adams to cover the extra expenses for the dinners. The challenge to board members from Danielle and Matt raised nearly \$2000. A huge thank you went to Leah for all of her assistance in organizing the meeting.

**Wetland Program Development Grant** – By next week all of the information being requested by EPA should be submitted so they can move forward with a contract. This \$115,000 is the biggest project taken on since the WMP. This will provide FotSJR with the ability to prioritize existing and past wetlands according to function of the wetland. This will then provide very good documentation to promote the enrollment of acres into WRP and other USDA programs. An extensive project budget was developed.

**Budget for FYE 3/31/2011** – In the past the budget for FotSJR has been pretty loose from year to year. As more grants are received, a fiscal year budget will be critical. Some grants actually will ask for that information. In the next year there will be approximately \$70,000 through the wetland program grant; \$2,000 from Heart of Cook; and \$2,500 from USF&W fish habitat impairment grant. Jim Coury felt a summary sheet of all the grants FotSJR is obligated to right now would be a huge benefit to the board. Geoff Cripe had agreed to put together a spread sheet with that information on it. Some of that information is listed on the website under Outreach. Having a yearly summary will provide good historical data for the organization. Matt and Danielle presented a draft Budget for FYE 3/31/2011. After some discussion Matt Meersman made a motion to adopt the budget including \$3,000 additional income from Freshwater Futures Grant; Rudy Kappe seconded the motion; motion carried.

**Heart of Cook Award** – There will be an awards ceremony on May 11 at the Shadowland Ballroom in St. Joseph, Michigan. Leah Cooper and Rudy Kappe will attend. The \$2,000 from this award will be used to carry out specific activities already committed to in the EPA wetland grant.

**June Meeting Location** – The next meeting will be held on June 24 at the AEP Elkhart Service Center on Old US 20 – Toledo Road from 1-3 p.m. This will be the first monthly Board meeting held in Indiana.

**South Bend River Clean Up** – About 150 people attended the clean up on March 27. It has been held at the same location for the past five years. A big thank you needs to be extended to Bob Owens for all of his hard work and devotion in organizing this clean up every year. Everybody who participates receives a community service certificate signed by the mayor of Mishawaka or South Bend.

**Other Items:**

- Matt reported that Margaret Smith is home and doing very well. It has been an almost miraculous recovery.
- Cass County is holding an Earth Day Celebration from 3-8 p.m. today in Lawless Park and everyone is invited. Geoff Cripe will be there.
- There is a networking session scheduled for May 27 in cooperation with IDEM and IASWCD. Go to their website to find more information. Matt encouraged everyone to attend.

- Matt spoke at the AEP spring meeting held at Notre Dame. There were about 52 in attendance. Matt talked about the sediment in the water and covered two main points; 1) Keeping the sediment out of the water using BMPS in both urban and rural areas; and 2) Sediment that is caused by in stream erosion.
- Matt has been contacted by several organizations for advertising with their organizations. The last contact was from the Calhoun Co. Sheriff's Department. Unless the Board feels otherwise, he will decline all the requests.
- Rudy Kappe reported that he can watch the salmon in McCoy's Creek since the dam was removed.
- Melanie Stoughton asked for letters of support to state representatives on the ag committee to maintain MEAP in Michigan. Her job and others across the state are in jeopardy if the funding is discontinued. There is a meeting on May 5 in Centerville at 5:30 p.m. with the state representative to discuss this issue. Matt made a motion to support continued funding for MEAP; Jim Coury seconded the motion; motion carried. Melanie will put together a letter for Matt to sign and get to the appropriate state representatives.
- Jim Coury reported \$3.7 million has been approved for AWEF to be allocated between June 11 -30.
- Eldred Adams expressed an interest in reviving the river clean ups again with assistance from the Boy Scouts. There are dollars earmarked for river clean-up, just need the people resources to help with organization.
- Chris Bauer reported there is an annual state grant with funds available for river clean-ups in Michigan.
- Daragh Deegan announced Earth Day evens in downtown Elkhart at Central Park on Saturday. Leah asked for pictures from Daragh to use in the next newsletter, which will focus on fisheries. Daragh's annual monitoring report has a lot of good pictures and information on the improvement of the fisheries habitat.
- USF&W Fisheries Grant will provide \$2,500 - \$5,000 for a workshop hosted by several agencies. This grant will identify the top 10 sites for dam and/or perched culvert removal to restore fish habitat. The study will look at and rank the dams and then USF&W will fund the removal.
- Jeff Reece talked about the need for dam security and what would happen with critical failures. There will be a draw down in the river of 5' from September 23 – October 14 from Twin Branch to Elkhart. He also said there have been some zebra mussels found around the dams in areas where there is not a lot of flow.
- Dave Forester reported on the Ox Creek project. MDNRE is working a step further on this project by establishing a plan for reducing impairment after the development of TMDL. They are getting the community involvement in plan development, which is a great thing.

**Meeting adjourned** at 2:45 p.m. with a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Daragh Deegan after a reminder from Matt about the June 24 meeting scheduled in Elkhart, Indiana.