

**Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 26, 2012—1:00pm**  
**Three Rivers Library—Three Rivers, Michigan**

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

- Directors: Eldred Adams, Bruce Barton, Brian Musser, Melanie Stoughton, Rachel Smith, Eric Kerney, Rudy Kappe, Ray Leising, Matt Meersman, Maria Mast, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe
- Watershed Council: Chris Bauer, MDEQ/WRD; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jeff Reece, IMP; Bill Courliss, Union Lake Asso.; John Nelson, St. Joe Co. CD (MI); Tom Howe, Two Rivers Coalition; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band;
- Visitors: Jen Miller, St. Joe Co. CD (MI)

**MINUTES** of the March Meeting were approved on a motion made by Brian Musser and seconded by Ray Leising.

**TREASURER'S REPORT**—was presented by Matt Meersman, President. Danielle was unable to attend the meeting due to unexpected travel. A year-end report for the fiscal year was presented. Watershed Council Annual Meeting event costs and profit were discussed briefly. We profited approximately \$1800 from the annual meeting. Total assets to date are \$52,260.54. The treasurer's report was approved on a motion made by Ruddy Adams and seconded by Rachel Smith.

**WETLAND PARTNERSHIP PROJECT**— Matt reported that the project is now a year and a half in, and the next quarterly meeting will be at 10:15 am on Thursday, May 24<sup>th</sup> before the monthly Friend's Board Meeting. The DEQ assessment is now completed, and the prioritization process for targeted mailings can soon begin. A parcel data merging meeting will be taking place Wednesday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Coldwater USDA office to start work on the county parcel data collected by Matt and others. Jim Coury asked Matt if there would be conservation district employees present for the meeting on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. Matt indicated that employees from Steuben, Van Buren, Calhoun, and Branch counties would be at the meeting. Jim Coury also said he is looking forward to seeing the outcome of the overall wetland project.

**WATERSHED STEWARDSHIP AWARD (Display Location)** --- The location of where the award should be placed was discussed, and the two ideas were placing it in the county conservation district office of that year's winner, or in the local library. Geoff complimented the construction of the award.

**WATERSHED COUNCIL MEETING REVIEW**—overall, there was positive feedback from the surveys returned. We had the highest attendance to date with approximately 95 people present. Geoff and Matt both agreed that the introduction of the board members at the beginning of the meeting could have been more structured and was a bit jumbled. Another comment made was that the person who was runner up for the watershed stewardship award was given more recognition than the actual recipient of the award. Marcy asked if anyone had any comments or had heard of any comments about the addition of a cash bar to the event. Maria said it was a nice addition and wondered whether we could use it as a fundraiser if we raised the prices of the drinks. Questions on legality of doing that were raised, and will be looked into for next year. Tom Springer’s presentation was a nice change from PowerPoint presentations we have had in the past.

**WEBSITE UPDATES** – Information on the watershed stewardship award and winner is now up on the website. All of the information from the fish passage study is on the website and available to be downloaded. Website housekeeping and the hosting of internal documents for board member access was discussed. Some of the brochures of past events will be removed from the website to allow room for new documents. A structure for hosting board member documents will be looked into. Rudy Kappe recommended setting the page up with the highest qualifier being importance, and then by year.

**EARTH DAY EVENTS**—A handful of earth day events were carried out through the watershed. Christiana Creek will be hosting a cleanup on April 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:00am. A program at Lawless Park called “Earth and Stars” is scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup> and will be ran by Korrine Bachleda.

**NEXT MEETING**— May 24, 2012 at Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, Michigan

**ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR—**

- Rachel Smith informed the group that there are two upcoming workshops for the Prairie River Watershed planning project. The first workshop on native plants and landscaping for water quality is Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, with a native plant sale corresponding with the workshop. The second workshop is scheduled for Saturday, July 28<sup>th</sup> and will be a tour highlighting best management practices implemented within the watershed. The tour will focus on keeping boats clean to avoid transfer of invasive species. Rachel will email Leah Cooper the information on both workshops to be added to the website.
- Rudy Kappe is happy to be back in Michigan after a long winter in Surprise, Arizona
- Matt Meersman has checked with the library on future meeting dates. The June meeting will be held in Indiana. Location will either be at AEP in Elkhart or another location yet to be determined. Currently, July is not scheduled for a FotSJR meeting. Holiday months of November and December will probably have meetings scheduled the

week prior to our usual meeting date, or the meetings will be canceled. More information as those meetings get closer.

- Matt Meersman announced that he will be giving a presentation to the LaGrange County Lake Council in anticipation of a signed a Watershed Council Agreement on April 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Jim Coury informed the group that there is a wetland training scheduled at Pierce Cedar Creek May 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>. The cost is \$50.00.
- Chris Bauer announced that a request for proposals will be out mid-summer, and the list for tier 1 targeted water bodies is being created. The group was asked to think of projects planned within the watershed that should be considered for 319 grant prioritization. The Pucker Street dam and Christiana Creek were brought up. The St. Joseph River watershed management plan should be looked at and updated to include dam removal if it currently does not have it listed as a priority. The fish migration barrier study recently completed could be added as an appendix.
- Jeff Reece announced that the St. Joseph River Basin Symposium, which is by invite only, is scheduled for May 18<sup>th</sup>. Anyone that would like to attend should check with Karen.
- Marcy Colclough let the group know that a March workshop about landscaping for clean water for the Galien had about 80 people attend, and the Friends were a partner.
- John Nelson announced that the St. Joseph County Conservation District is working on a statewide campaign and will be looking for partners and donors. The campaign is geared towards river cleanups. The idea is to post statewide river cleanup information online with the goal of creating a website similar to the "Pure Michigan" program. There will be a fundraiser held on June 9<sup>th</sup> that will be by invitation only. Contact John Nelson for more information. Currently there are eight scheduled cleanups scheduled with the conservation district running from May to September and the district is looking for volunteers for each cleanup. The district is also looking for donors towards the cleanups, as well as grant funding to cover the cost of the events. Chris Bauer said that the state typically does not help fund woody debris removal projects unless they are to address key hydrological issues, which these cleanups currently are not.

**Meeting adjourned** at 2:05pm