

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 22, 2013—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Eric Kerney, Rudy Kappe, Danielle Meersman, Ron Niezgodski, Ray Leising, Jim Coury, Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Melanie Stoughton, Bruce Barton
- **Watershed Council:** Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Dave Foerster, Two Rivers Coalition; Bob Jones, LaGrange Co. SWCD; Joe Schmees, IDEM; Bill Courliss, Union Lake Association; Karen Mackowiak, St. Joseph River Basin Commission; Chris Bauer, MDEQ; Jeff Reece, Indiana Michigan Power
- **Visitors:** Dona Hunter; Deborah Haak; Abigail Grieve; Matthew Bussler, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians

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

Minutes of the June 2013 board meeting were approved as submitted with a motion by Ron Niezgodski seconded by Maria Mast.

Treasurers Report was presented by Danielle Meersman. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was made by Maria Mast and seconded by Ray Leising.

OLD BUSINESS

Wetland Partnership Project – A quarterly meeting was held in the morning prior to the monthly FotSJR board meeting. Matt Meersman asked Bruce Barton to summarize the partnership project. Matt Meersman also announced that the grant was officially extended until August 2014.

Membership Development and Fundraising— Matt Meersman spoke briefly about presenting the “Clean Water Campaign” at the “Green Drinks” event in South Bend, Indiana where approximately 50 people were in attendance. Many of the people in attendance were interested in finding funding for their specific projects. Matt said it raised awareness of the FotSJR group, and our mission.

Matt provided an update on the progress of the “Clean Water Campaign” point-of-sale donation project. There are currently no retailers collecting money through the program. Matt Meersman brought attention to the board about the paddling/running race on the St. Joe River in South Bend that he and Danielle are putting on this year, and what was discussed at the June board meeting. Originally, the funds generated from the race were going to go towards the FotSJR general fund. Matt Meersman proposed to instead use the funds as seed money towards the goal of being able to provide smaller grants to conservation organizations in need of funding for small projects or education as stated in the St. Joseph River Watershed Management Plan. This money could be the starter money that would help determine how to structure the grant proposal process through the FotSJR group.

Geoff Cripe noted that there are software programs available that can be used for Point of Sale opportunities with local retailers.

Bill Courliss, of the Union Lake Association, suggested that the board members look into legal advice on how to work with local municipalities/utilities on the Point of Sale program. Bill noted that Union City currently generates their own electricity, and there is a possibility of working with the FotSJR towards a Point of Sale item on the billing statements to the residents. Matt Meersman asked to work with Bill Courliss and Union City, through the advice of a lawyer to form a draft of how this municipal Point of Sale would work. Matt also stated that he would work with Fluid Fun on the retail side of the fundraising campaign to begin the “Clean Water Campaign” process.

Jim Coury suggested that state agencies who received federal funding for conservation related projects may want non-profit agencies, like FotSJR to help handle administrative matters of those projects. Jim also recommended that a list of large philanthropists throughout the watershed be generated with the possibility of a capital campaign in the future.

A suggestion by Marcy Colclough was made to draft an example of what type of mailer would go into a utility bill of a “Clean Water Campaign” participating municipality. Geoff Cripe stated that there are some models available to take ideas from, and that more work would be done to provide an example of what information would be developed for the public. Treasurer Danielle Meersman noted that a link to the FotSJR website should also be available to provide information on what the campaign is, and how it would work through municipalities and retailers.

NEW BUSINESS

LaGrange SWCD Support—Two projects are currently needing support from FotSJR. Bob Jones from the LaGrange SWCD summarized the projects. One is a planning project for the North Branch of the Elkhart that will be approximately 30 months, and another 36 month planning project for the Little Elkhart watershed. The Little Elkhart project will take two previously drafted plans and merge them into one plan. At this time, no commitment for match is being requested. A motion to support these projects was made by Ray Leising, seconded by Daragh Deegan. Motion carried. Dona Hunter will provide a sample letter of support to Matt Meersman for FotSJR letters of support.

McCoy Creek Update—Matt Meersman received an email from Tom Fehlner with several updates on the work that has been completed on McCoy Creek. The FotSJR was a partner in some of the successful grant proposals used to complete the work. Tom Feltner thanked the group for all the support. Rudy Kappe requested an electronic copy of the report. Marcy Colclough suggested that an update on the website be added regarding the McCoy Creek projects. Rudy Kappe also noted that four miles of trail along McCoy Creek and the St. Joseph River has been completed for multi-use.

OTHER ITEMS

- **Eric Kerney**—The Huron Potawatomi Tribe is requesting a letter of support regarding a Tribal Wildlife grant through the USFWS. The grant proposal focuses on fish and wildlife habitat, as well as Wild Rice protection, and water quality improvement. This is a grant that has been previously applied for by the tribe, and supported by FotSJR, but has not been awarded. The Calhoun Conservation District has written a letter of support to re-apply for this grant. A motion to draft a letter of support was made by Geoff Cripe, and seconded by Jim Coury. Motion carried.

- **Danielle Meersman**—Danielle would like to change the PayPal account from Leah Cooper’s name into her name. Danielle has been trying to get it moved into her name, but needs a letter from the organization with all the board member’s signatures present at the meeting. Danielle provided a letter, which was passed around for board member signatures. Matt requested that the board members sign the letter and provide board title below.
- **Geoff Cripe**—Newsletter Update: Geoff announced that there is a newsletter started by Rachel Smith, who was unable to attend the August board meeting. Geoff noted that there will be at least one more newsletter sent out this year. Matt Meersman urged that the newsletter really needs to include projects that the FotsJR has committed local match to in order to meet our match commitments.
- **Dave Foerster**—Dave summarized the success of the “Grapes and Grains” event held in Paw Paw where the Two Rivers Coalition performed bar tending duties as a fundraiser. Dave said the TRC Annual Meeting would be held on December 2nd, with Peter Sinclair as the keynote speaker.
- **Marcy Colclough**—Marcy updated the group on a few important items regarding 319 grants and grant deadlines, dam removal projects, and upcoming workshops/seminars. She urged everyone to attend the Greentown Michiana event in South Bend. It will be held October 10-11. Handouts with draft agendas and other information were passed out to the meeting attendees.
- **Matt Meersman**—There has been an invitation from the Pokagon band to join them on their upcoming Water Walk. It will be held on August 30th. For anyone interested in attending, they should arrive no later than 6:45 am at Rogers Lake.
- **Bill Courliss**—The Union Lake Community will be raffling a handmade kayak. The proceeds will go towards the Union City area. Tickets are available at the meeting for purchase.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Thursday, September 26th at 1:00pm in Three Rivers at the Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35 pm.