

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Three Rivers Public Library – Three Rivers, Michigan
Thursday, August 25, 2011 – 1:00 p.m.

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. and asked for introductions from those in attendance.

IN ATTENDANCE:

- Directors – Eldred Adams, Eric Kerney, Matt Meersman, Geoff Cripe, Daragh Deegan, Brian Musser, Dona Hunter, Rudy Kappe, Melanie Stoughton, Jim Coury
- Watershed Council Members – Angie Brown and Joe Schmees, IDEM; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Karen Mackowiac, SJRBC, Don Sporleder, Michiana Watershed; Dave Forester, Two Rivers Coalition, Jeff Wenzel, St. Joseph County Drain Commissioner; Bruce Campbell, Cass County Water Resources Commissioner
- Visitors – Eric Kurtz, Elkhart Co. SWCD; Rebecca Shank, Fabius Twp. Citizen Coalition and St. Joe County CD; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Rachel Smith, Branch County CD; Bruce Snook, River Country Journal – SWMLC

Matt distributed copies of the minutes from the last meeting and the agenda for this meeting to those in attendance who needed them. He also explained the order for the meeting with comments taken from anyone present on all issues, but only board members being allowed to vote.

MINUTES of the June Board Meeting were approved on a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Melanie Stoughton. Matt thanked the LaGrange Co. SWCD for hosting the June meeting at Par Gil Natural Resources Learning Center near LaGrange, Indiana.

TREASURER'S REPORT – In Danielle Meersman's absence Matt presented the financial report through August 24, 2011. A grant report and payment request were submitted to EPA for the Wetland Partnership Project, which will generate some income to offset part of what has gone out. The treasurer's report was approved on a motion made by Rudy Kappe and seconded by Daragh Deegan.

OUTREACH COORDINATOR REPORT – Matt explained that Leah Cooper has taken a full time job, so will not be able to attend monthly board meetings. She is still going to fulfill the duties of her contract with FotSJR and is working on the next newsletter, along with a flyer for the Fish Migration Workshop. Matt is in regular contact with her.

WETLAND PARTNERSHIP PROJECT – The quarterly meeting of the steering committee was held in the morning here in the library. It was well attended again. The third quarterly report and invoice were submitted to EPA for approval and payment. Matt reminded everyone that he is available to do additional presentations on the wetland project upon request.

FISH MIGRATION BARRIER WORKSHOP – Marcy, Leah Cooper, Matt and Daragh have been working on planning the workshop, which will wrap up the second largest project the FotSJR has been working on. The grant compiled an inventory and prioritized large barriers to fish migration (dams) in the

watershed. It also inventoried a portion of the road stream crossings across the watershed. The FotSJR will be contracted by the Potawatomi RC&D to plan and host a workshop that will present the results of the study, discuss the impact of good/bad road stream crossings and tour the area to see some examples.

Daragh is already working with Army Corp of Engineers on a feasibility study for the 2 dams on the Elkhart River. They are also working with US Fish and Wildlife to complete the fish assessments at the Benton and Baintertown dams and will be applying for a feasibility study with the ERRA, St. Joe River Basin Commission and Elkhart Co. SWCD. Leah Cooper is working on a brochure to promote the workshop which should be out sometime next week. Marcy passed out a save the date flyer, so promotion could begin. The workshop and bus tour will be held on October 14 at the Christiana Creek Country Club from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Online registration will be available for the workshop, which will cost \$25 to cover lunch, transportation and workshop costs. Brian Musser asked how many could attend the workshop and was told they were targeting about 40, but would check with the country club to confirm the numbers they could accommodate. Brian also asked if any progress had been made for obtaining CECs for this workshop. No follow up had been done with this, but Matt will check with Maria.

Marcy distributed a flyer on the Watervliet Dam Removal Project. Dave Forester asked if all of the projects would include a before and after fish assessment. He felt like this would encourage other projects and be a good way to measure success. There are other projects moving forward even though this grant is not completed. There is a proposal in place to remove a dam on McCoy Creek in Buchanan and two road crossing upgrades scheduled in Berrien County.

FAWN RIVER GRANT – LaGrange and Steuben County SWCDs submitted a 319 grant proposal to complete a watershed management plan for Fawn River in both Indiana and Michigan. Dona asked if FotSJR would supply a letter of support. The letter would help get the grant approved. This would be strictly for writing the plan, with implementation funds being requested once the plan is complete. It would fulfill plan requirements for both Indiana and Michigan once it is completed and then each county could apply for implementation funds, if they wanted to. Rudy Kappe moved to approve a letter of support; seconded by Jim Coury; motion carried. Dona will get a sample letter to Matt.

NOTTAWASEPPI HURON BAND GRANT APPLICATION – Eric Kerney asked for a letter of support for a US Fish and Wildlife Service grant they are writing to provide habitat and wildlife management on some of the properties owned by the Nottawaseppi Huron Band. It will include both habitat improvement and water quality protection. Dona Hunter moved to approve the letter of support; seconded by Daragh Deegan; motion carried.

OTHER ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR:

- Matt reported on river clean ups on both Christiana Creek and the Prairie River.
- Marcy and Matt will be presenting information on the Black River Watershed Wetland Assessment Project at the Michigan Wetland Association Annual Meeting in Traverse City.

- Ruty Adams asked if the board would like for his son to come to a board meeting, or to a special meeting, to provide some tips on fund raising. His son has a lot of experience in this area. Ruty also asked about the Pottawatomie Annual Report. He had received a copy and was very impressed with the information. Eric Kerney will try to get an electronic copy to Matt.
- Dave Forester reported on the Van Buren CD 2nd annual “River Rescue” cleanup for the Paw Paw and Black Rivers, which also included a successful cleanup on Hickory Creek in Berrien County.
- Marcy reported on resubmitting a 319 grant proposal for the Village of Paw Paw, which will pay landowners upstream of Maple Lake for agricultural BMPs. It will fund installation of BMPs to reduce sediment plus make a payment to landowners based on the tons of sediment that are reduced with the practice.
- The Southwest Michigan Planning Commission has received a GLRI grant from the GLC to pilot a payment for ecosystem services project. The SWMPC will contract with the Van Buren CD to hire someone for education and outreach, including making contact with landowners.
- Dave Forester added information on the Maple Lake impoundment on the Paw Paw River. It has been choked with sediment and weeds. The lake was lowered 4 feet for the entire winter and there was a significant reduction to the weed growth. Aerators were added to aerate the muck and the level of muck is going down after only a few months.
- Jeff Wenzel reported on behalf of Becky Shank that there is a river clean-up scheduled for Prairie River on Wednesday and Saturday, plus other dates through September. Call 467-6336 x 5 to volunteer to assist.
- Don Sporleder reported on the meeting of the IDNR Trails Advisory Board at Interlake near Evansville next Thursday. He also shared the dates for the Mid-American Trails Conference at Ft. Wayne at the Convention Center on October 2-5.
- Karen Mackowiak said she will be attending the State of Lake Michigan Conference at the Blue Chip Casino coming up soon.
- Rachel Smith had 26 people attend the Prairie River roll out meeting for the planning grant she is working with Branch Co. CD to complete. They received good input from the public. Tomorrow will be the first official day she spends in the watershed. Jim Coury represented FotSJR at the meeting and felt it was a very good meeting.

NEXT MEETING – Thursday, September 22, 2011 at 1:00 p.m. in the Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, Michigan.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m. Minutes recorded by Dona Hunter, Secretary.