

Friends of the St. Joe River Association Board Meeting Minutes
Thursday, August 27, 2015—1:00 PM
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, MI

IN ATTENDANCE:

- **Directors:** Matt Meersman, Melanie Stoughton, Bob Jones, Ron Niezgodski, Danielle Meersman, John Law, Daragh Deegan, Eric Kerney
 - **Watershed Council:** Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Jeremy Reiman, MACOG/SJRBC; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Kathy Worst, Branch Conservation District; Jennifer Kanine, Pokagon Band; Dennis Bradley, Fabius Township
- Visitors:** Ron Johnson, Fabius Township Wetlands Committee; Reynaldo Hernandez, League of Women Voters; Korie Blyveis, Newberg Township; Tyler Tankersley, Branch Conservation District

President Matt Meersman called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm, welcomed everyone to the meeting and called for introductions.

Minutes of the May and June 2015 board meeting were reviewed. There were not enough board members present at the June meeting to approve the May minutes, therefore the May minutes were voted on at the August board meeting. A motion to approve the May 2015 minutes was made by Ron Neizgodski, and seconded by Jeff Wenzel. Motion carried. A motion to approve the June 2015 minutes was made by John Law and seconded by Jeff Wenzel. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Danielle Meersman for May and June 2015. A motion made to accept the treasurer's report as presented was made by Ron Neizgodski, and seconded by Daragh Deegan. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

Regional Conservation Partnership Project Update—Matt summarized the group on the project goals and progress to date. A meeting to discuss revision of conservation practices and pre-screening and ranking tools was held earlier in the morning, with many watershed council and board members present. Updates from the meeting were given by Marcy Colclough, Melanie Stoughton, and Kathy Worst. Marcy noted that on the Indiana side, over 90% of the five year funding allocated for the state was ear-marked for applications for the first year sign up period, and that Indiana will be going to the National level to request 90% of the funds up front to fund all the applicants meeting the requirements. Marcy also noted that Michigan spent their estimated allocation for their first year, with the majority of applications approved in Branch County.

NEW BUSINESS

LaGrange County SWCD Fawn River 319 Grant Support—Support implementation in the Fawn River Watershed for Agricultural BMPs based on approved WMP. Worth noting: CWA monies funding agricultural practices. A motion to support the project was made by Melanie Stoughton, and seconded by John Law. Motion carried. Matt will draft and submit a letter of support to LaGrange SWCD.

Cass County CD Aquatic Habitat Grant Support—Matt announced that Justin Miller from the Cass CD is submitting a pre-proposal for the DNR Aquatic Habitat Grant, and requested support from FotSJR. The grant project is to replace failing culverts with appropriately sized structures along road-stream crossings along Christiana Creek. A motion to support the project with up to \$1000 in kind match was made by John Law, and seconded by Ron Niezgodski. Motion carried.

12th Annual St. Joe River Races-Matt summarized the past event held annually, noting that the FotSJR was the fiduciary last year. Matt announced that September 26th is the date of the event, with a running race at 8:45 am, a three mile paddling race at 10 am, and a family race at 1 pm. Veteran's Memorial Park in South Bend, Indiana is the venue for the event. Matt is requesting support from FotSJR to fund the liability insurance for the event, which was approximately \$114 last year. A motion to provide funding for the insurance was made by Jeff Wenzel up to \$114, and seconded by Daragh Deegan. Motion carried.

Volunteer Opportunities—Matt announced volunteer requests for upcoming events. Tiller's International requested presence of the Friends at their annual Harvest Fest. A citizen from Hillsdale County also contacted Matt regarding their river clean up days as potential volunteer opportunities.

Announcements

Marcy Colclough – Marcy reported that she is working on a project with SWMLC and Two Rivers Coalition. Marcy also noted she is working on two other projects; one on Ox Creek working on Agricultural Best Management Practices with Berrien CD, and another project with the city on green infrastructure.

Kathy Worst—summarized the pre-proposal that was submitted by the Branch CD for a DNR Invasive Species Grant. Branch is also putting in a grant proposal on the Prairie River through the DNR Aquatic Habitat Program along Brink Rd. and Bawden Road. The Brink Road site is under consideration for complete bridge replacement, and the Branch CD wants to have it replaced in an eco-friendly manner.

Korie Blyveis—Korie announced that Westrate Park near Russ Forest is potentially being purchased by the state. Korie also announced that the Earth and Sky Event at Dr. Lawless Park is scheduled for May 21, 2016 and asked people to keep the event in mind. The event will be held in the evening.

Melanie Stoughton—announced that the Kalamazoo CD is working with others in Kalamazoo County to develop an Ag Preservation and Open Space ordinance and board. Melanie also reported that the KCD is listed as a partner organization on an Invasive Species Grant through the DNR, with the Kalamazoo Nature Center listed as the applicant of record. The project will include Barry, Calhoun, and Kalamazoo Counties. Melanie announced that the St. Joseph County CD (MI) still has tickets available at the door for tomorrow evening's Harvest Dinner in Centreville.

Jeremy Reiman—thanked the Friends for letter of support on project to do diagnostics along Cobus Creek. West Lakes—North Branch of the Elkhart River—Basin Commission received many comments regarding flooding in the area. The basin commission is working towards becoming a moderator between the counties involved. Jeremy Reiman asked if there were any other instances within the St. Joe River Watershed with similar flooding issues. Matt noted that there were other subwatersheds in the area (Baugo Creek) that have had similar issues. Discussion regarding potential issues and solutions ensued between the board, watershed council, and meeting attendees.

John Law—Friends of Cobus Creek had a field event two weeks ago that was well attended, approximately eighty people throughout the day. Daragh Deegan spoke about the discussion to re-establish Blanding's Turtles in the area.

NEXT MEETING

Next meeting scheduled for September 24, 2015 at 1:00 p.m. at Three Rivers Public Library.