

Wetland Partnership Meeting Summary
Thursday, August 22, 2013
Three Rivers Public Library—Three Rivers, Michigan
Coordinated by Friends of the St. Joe River Association (FotSJR)

Matt Meersman, President of the FotSJR welcomed everyone to the August quarterly meeting. The meeting began with introductions of all those in attendance.

IN ATTENDANCE: Karen Mackowiak, SJRBC; Chris Bauer, MDEQ-WRD; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi; Matthew Bussler, Pokagon Band of Potawatomi; Eric Kerney, Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi; Maria Mast, St. Joe Co., IN MS4 & FotSJR; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Geoff Cripe, SWMLC & FotSJR; John & Jonelen Faher, FotSJR Members; Shane Perfect, ACRES Land Trust; Eric Kurtz, Elkhart Co. SWCD; Joe Schmees, IDEM; Jim Coury, FotSJR; Melanie Stoughton, FotSJR.

OVERVIEW OF WETLAND PROJECT: Matt Meersman gave a brief overview of the project for those that were new to attending the meetings.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS UPDATES: A meeting was held at the Love Creek Nature Center in July. Matt Meersman reported that there was a great turnout at this event, with many landowners interested in speaking with Geoff Cripe of the SWMLC regarding potential easements on their properties. The meeting featured a landowner from the area speaking about the conservation easements placed on his land, and the benefits to these types of easements. Geoff Cripe stated that many people also inquired further about restoration programs with NRCS or USFWS.

GRANT ADMINISTRATION: Matt Meersman reported that the grant has officially been extended to August 2014. Marcy Colclough and Matt Meersman will be submitting the 10th quarterly report at the end of September.

LANDOWNER OUTREACH EVENTS: Matt Meersman announced that the next event would likely be in the Three Rivers area with the time and location to be determined. Possible locations for the meeting include the Commission on Aging building, Camp Wakeshma, or Camp Eberhart YMCA Camp. Other locations discussed were the Riviera Theatre. The dates of the possible event are September 23-26. The event will highlight those organizations with conservation programs applicable to wetland preservation. Geoff Cripe noted that the Fabius Township Wetlands Committee is interested in hosting the event. Geoff reported that he is also interested in planning an event in the Colon area over the winter months. Eric Kerney stated that the event could possibly be held at the NHBPI reservation. Regarding event planning, Matt brought up the need to plan another event in Indiana, as the last event was held in Howe some time ago. The group discussed possible locations for the Indiana event, and

obstacles that might prevent getting a good group of people from a wide range to the event. Attendees from Indiana were asked to look into possible locations, and let Matt know if any good locations are available. Some possibilities included the Baugo Creek area, the Elkhart Environmental Center, and any upcoming Indiana events that the project could be tied in to. Dona Hunter and Eric Kurtz suggested Ligonier, IN.

MUNICIPAL OUTREACH STRATEGY: Julie Pioch from the Citizen Planner Program of Michigan State University Extension is incorporating wetland protection in their program. Marcy Colclough summarized the Citizen Planner program and the objectives of the wetland protection modules they are developing. The goal is to recruit people in the SJRW to sign up for the courses held in November. Scholarships have been made available and will be awarded based on merit and location.

Marcy Colclough reported that she has been meeting with planning and zoning people within the watershed to develop a strategy for municipal outreach. A wetland booklet with a list of resources for planning and zoning, and information from the data analysis is hoped to be completed and available for the November Citizen Planner Wetland Module workshop. A wetland program for municipal officials in the Indiana portion of the watershed is also being planned. Offers to meet with local planning commissions have also been made. An incentive for planning and zoning workshops has been to offer the municipality a set of maps for their community with the wetland data.

DATA DELIVERY: Matt has made maps for specific areas within the watershed, and is now able to send along an example methodology report from a similar project focused on the Paw Paw River Watershed. Online data delivery is still the ultimate goal. Indiana has a website (INDIANA Map) to view and download GIS data, but Michigan does not. Other concerns regarding data delivery remain, specifically with privacy issues, and will continue to be addressed.

NEXT STEPS:

- Bundling the data for each county—Matt Meersman
- Continue planning holding landowner meetings—Matt Meersman, Geoff Cripe
- Continue with municipal outreach strategy

NEXT MEETING—These meetings are usually held on the same days as a regular FotSJR Board meeting. The next meeting should be November 21st, but there are conflicts of interest due to Van Buren CD's "Farming for the Future" Event held that day. Everyone agreed to meet on Thursday, December 19th, 2013 at 10:15 at the Three Rivers Public Library.

Meeting adjourned at 12:00 noon.