FRIENDS OF THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER (FOSJR)  
WETLAND PARTNERSHIP MEETING SUMMARY  
THURSDAY APRIL 24, 2014 10:15 AM  
THREE RIVERS PUBLIC LIBRARY, THREE RIVERS MI.  
MINUTES

1. INTRODUCTIONS  
MATT MEERSEMAN, President of the FOSJR welcomed everyone to the April 24, 2014 Quarterly meeting. The meeting began with introductions of those in attendance.

2. OVERVIEW OF WETLAND PROJECT  
MATT MEERSEMAN (President) gave a short summary of what the Wetland Partnership Project has been about, as has been customary at the start of each of these meetings.

3. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT AND STATUS UPDATES  
Since the last meeting (Dec. 2013) the Wetland Partnership has focused on out reach to municipalities, going to 47 Indiana Counties (Lagrange, Elkhart, St. Joseph Counties among them), focusing on Wetland Functional Analyses and its uses. At these meetings - Marcy Colclough (SJR) focused on how to use the Wetland Functional Analysis especially for planning and zoning. FOSJR appreciates the time and dedication and skill that Marcy demonstrated in doing these presentations of this valuable natural resource tool.
WETLAND PARTNERSHIP MEETING (FOX/SEP)  
APRIL 24, 2014 MINUTES (CONTINUED)

PROJECT DEVELOPMENTS AND STATUS (CONTINUED)

Elkhart County Presentation - Updated project status, discussed restricting buildings, hydrate soils (Porter B. Ind.), do this as well as counties in northern Michigan. The Planning Commission have had a lot of questions on how to use the WFA and its local application.

LaGrange County Presentation - The folks here were very interested in Wetland Functional Analysis (WFA), the County Surveyor attended and asked questions. Nancy met with the GIS specialist for the County on WFA application. The County is doing some wetland protection through Park Acquisition - they picked up another 90-100 ac. for park just recently. 

LaGrange County Community Foundation has helped with money to purchase parkland (i.e. near Pine Knob Creek Park).

SW Michigan Area - Nancy has also done WFA presentations to MPO's, looking for opportunities for road projects and wetland protection. Antwerp Twp. was developing a more protective buffer ordinance within 50 ft. of wetlands, streams, rivers.

Nancy will look for more opportunities to meet with St.uben and Noble Counties in IND in the near future on WFA and 2 more presentations in SW Michigan shortly (one at Harbor Shores).
Mr. Joe Schmeege of the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) was going to be at this meeting today but could not come. Matt reported from Mr. Schmeege that Indiana is developing an overall Wetland Plan Strategy for the State outlining their goals for wetland protection and restoration. There has already been a major presentation on this in Indiana, it was widely attended. They used Turning Point software to help the attending public to vote on their choices, using WFA as a tool. Matt will share our WFA tools and other tools used in our process with the State of Indiana, Michigan, through our MDNR, as well as doing the WFA process in other watersheds as well (St. Croix, Kalamazoo).

4. Landowner Outreach Events

"Wetlands do the Dirty Work" Presentation done at the Huron Pottowasomi Tribe Headquarters in Athens, Mich., with residents and tribal members present from the area (Calhoun Co. - Northern Creek, Pine Creek, Tahnosa, Athens, Portage Creek). Focus on key landowners, especially in mailings, looking for priority protection and restoration of wetlands and wetland areas. Eric Kearney (FOTS JR Board 4 Tribe) did the presentation.
Landowner Outreach Events (continued)

Geoff Crane of the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy (SWMLC) has also done presentations on the WFA process. SWMLC and Geoff especially have been huge supporters and proponents of the WFA process.

At the Potawatomi Tribal Event (Eric Keaney) there were 25 people attended with 15 area landowners. Rob Zurek also came to help with presentations and questions (MDNR specialized on WFA). Matt McEwan also attended and assisted.

The Tribe itself (Huron Potawatomi, Athens, WI) has done a 75AC Wetland Restoration through the federal USDA-NRCS Wetland Restoration Program (WRP). Also 2 attendees at the meeting had done conservation easements with included wetlands through the SWMLC Land Conservancy.

Matt noted that the USDA-NRCS (federal) wetland protection program (WRP) is changing its title to WRE. It has been one of the key programs in the United States in planning and implementing wetland restorations.

Matt McEwan also did other WFA presentations at Coldwater MI Rotary, Montessori Schools, Lions Clubs.

Marcy also did one in Boston Harbor recently.
5. **Municipal Outreach - Next Events**

It is to be noted that landowner and municipal outreach for this WFA project has been extensive and successful. The WFA process is becoming firmly embedded in our region, helping us identify and select critical wetlands for protection and restoration. Many thanks to Matt, Nancy, Geoff and so many others for their dedication and time spent talking and presenting on WFA.

Next Big Event Being Planned - Elkhart River Event. Where to have it? 222 Eugene St - at Police Dept. (bigger space), Community Center (?), When (?). Focus will be on wetland restoration and WFA. 85% of invitations will go to landowners and farmers. Look for early to mid June 2014. Will be similar to other WFA presentations done in Ind. (i.e., The House, Indiana presents - sent out 500 invitations to that one, 50 people came, good attendance).

6. **Data Delivery and Documentation**

Key Question - who will use and control the WFA process (our project), once the project is complete. Who will store, oversee, and manage the data.
Data delivery and documentation (continued)

Matt Maereman is only one of three local (area) people really knowledgeable about using and applying the WFA process (also includes

Michael Colclough and Geoff Cruze)

MECOG is one of the organizations that could do this, like the SWMLC, as well as the STATE MDNR.

MECOG's Jack Trupp is knowledgeable.

Kosseck Co., St. Joseph Co., and Elkhart Co. - all in Indiana are represented by MECOG, which is developing GIS for this. With the relationship that MECOG has with the St. Joseph River Basin Commission, MECOG might be a good organization to house and oversee the WFA information and process, and help share it with others. We don't want the very important WFA program to wither and die.

FOH-SJR (Matt) also met with the State of Michigan, Center for Geographic Information (CGI) on this subject - they house the Michigan Wetland Map Viewer. Rob Ziemba of the MDNR is working on a tool for FOH-SJR on WFA exposure. The problem is getting the specialists as well as municipalities and consultants to understand what our data and the processes are. Matt had a 3 hr. meeting with them.

There is extra money in our WFA grant for this and good support at MDNR (Rob Z) for expending our program. But MDNR could do this by Oct. 2014 when our grant ends.
Data Delivery and Documentation (continued)

Alternatives - We could pay MDNR (Rob3) to help develop this tool or pay CGI to do this.

Chad Fizzel - MDNR Michigan Wetlands (who works w/ Rob3) noted that MDNR/MDEQ could use this new State funding to do this because it been such a successful program (WFA).

Can we (FoTSJR) get an extension for our grant to continue this very successful demonstration program (WFA) - the FoTSJR Wetland Grant.

Matt M noted that our key staff knows how to use this data (Matt, Marcie, Geoff, some others) and we have parcel data over good parts of the whole watershed. We also have Meta Data on our project and Matt is working on a final report for the Project which will be downloadable. This is good data for watershed Management plans (319 permits) which will have wetland requirements.

Indiana has a huge GIS program for wetlands protection/restoration, Michigan has great data on wetlands because of the expense of the FoTSJR Wetlands Grant and our work here as well as MDNR (Rob3). We must extend, expand, and protect this WFA program for essential wetland Protection and Restoration.

Next meeting - Aug 21, 2014
Meeting Adjourned about 11:50 AM