



## **WETLAND PARTNERSHIP MEETING**

*St Joseph River Watershed*

**APRIL 28, 2011**

**10:15 AM**

**Three Rivers Public Library**

### **AGENDA**

1. Introductions
2. Overview of Wetland Project
3. Project Developments and Status Updates
4. Non-Functional Prioritization Criteria
5. Project Web Site Cross Linking
6. Grant Administration and Local Match (partner agreements/tracking sheets)
7. Next steps
8. Next meeting

### **WETLAND PARTNERSHIP MEMBERS**

- MDNRE Water Resources Division – Chris Bauer
- IDEM Watershed Planning Branch – Angie Brown
- MDNRE Fisheries Division – Brian Gunderman
- Nottawaseppi Huron Band of Potawatomi Indians – John Rodwan/Eric Kerney
- Pokagon Band of Potawatomi Indians – Mark Parrish/Wade Hawes
- St. Joseph River Basin Commission – Karen Mackowiak
- Southwest Michigan Planning Commission – Marcy Colclough
- Michigan State University Extension, Citizen Planner – Wayne Beyea
- Purdue University Extension, Planning with POWER – Robert McCormick
- St. Joseph County Conservation District, Michigan – Amy DeShon
- LaGrange County Soil & Water Conservation District – Dona Hunter/Martin Franke
- Cass County Conservation District, Michigan – Amy Druskovich
- Elkhart County Soil & Water Conservation District – Nancy Brown
- Branch County Conservation District – Kathy Worst
- Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy – Peter Ter Louw/Geoff Cripe
- ACRES Land Trust – Jason Kissel/Shane Perfect/Norm Cox
- Ducks Unlimited – Michael Sertle
- US Fish & Wildlife Service – Jim Hazelman/Scott Fetters

**Wetland Partnership Meeting Summary**  
**Thursday, April 28, 2011**  
**Three Rivers Public Library, Three Rivers, Michigan**  
**Coordinated by Friends of the St. Joe River Association (FotSJR)**

Matt Meersman, President of FotSJR, welcomed everyone and asked for introductions.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Angie Brown, IDEM; Grant Poole, Pokagon Band; Maria Schaefer, St. Joseph Co. Indiana Department of Public Works; James Coury, FotSJR board of directors; Chris Bauer, MDEQ-WRD; Derek Thompson, NRCS LaGrange, Indiana; Brian Musser, Steuben Co. SWCD; Marcy Colclough, SWMPC; Martin Franke, LaGrange Co. SWCD; Brian Gunderman, MDNR-Fisheries; Nancy Brown, Elkhart Co. SWCD; Geoffrey Cripe, SWMLC, FotSJR; Leah Cooper, FotSJR Outreach Coordinator; Michael Sertle, Ducks Unlimited; Amy DeShon, St. Joe Co. CD; Eric Kerney, Huron Potawatomi; Dona Hunter, LaGrange Co. SWCD, FotSJR

**OVERVIEW OF PROJECT:** Matt presented a very brief overview of the wetland grant project in cooperation with MDEQ and other partners.

**PROJECT DEVELOPMENT & UPDATE:** 35 to 40% of the wetland assessment has been completed. The soils data is not the same in Indiana compared to Michigan, but they still should be able to merge the data into one file and move forward. The historical land cover data for Michigan is not available for Indiana.

The second quarterly report has been submitted to the National EPA office. Rebecca Dills with the EPA office helped Matt acquire a scholarship to attend a wetland conference at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia. It was a good meeting, even though it was geared mostly toward regulators.

Matt has given several presentations on the project. He presented to the Michigan Association of Drain Commissioners with Marcy Colclough on Tuesday. He also participated in the Steuben Co. SWCD Annual Meeting and the Branch County CD Expo.

**Project Web Site Cross Linking** – Leah and Matt are working on web site links for all of the data being collected through the grant. They will send the information out to everyone with suggested language and instructions for linking partner web pages.

**Grant Administration and Local Match** – Tracking sheets of local match need to be sent to Matt. He has received several of them, but not all of them. Matt will re-send the local match forms in a completable PDF so everyone will have it.

**Non-Functional Prioritization Criteria** – Matt and Marcy distributed a prioritization outline to identify areas where wetland restoration and protection could have the most significant water quality benefits and are the most practical in terms of key factors. This methodology includes two different categories of criteria, which can be combined or looked at individually. The first category focuses on potential water quality benefits, while the second focuses on practicality or ease of restoration or protection. It is possible many areas which rank high in the “Water Quality” category will rank low in the “Practicality” category, but these categories should not be mutually exclusive. The ranking outline was reviewed and discussed by those present. This ranking data will help agencies and organizations locate priority projects. After ranking by water quality and practicality, it was suggested that other non-GIS factors should be considered to make final prioritization decisions. All of this information can be built into additional outreach tools to be shared across the watershed. This list is probably a short

list, with the potential for many other factors being used to rank. This can be used as a tool to encourage public officials to make changes in local wetland protection ordinances. The information on this hand-out will provide more background information needed to create a general data set to prioritize wetlands for both water quality and practicality. The more information that can be provided to decision makers, the easier it will be to make changes across the watershed. Using the number of cooperating landowners in a specific area and/or cooperating agencies, along with funding that is available will help determine where the focus should be.

**River Clean Up Project** – Amy DeShon, with St. Joseph Co. Conservation District, is trying to deal with the problem of meth lab debris in the river. During river clean-ups they are coming across some of this hazardous waste and the clean-up funds for meth related debris is empty. No one has done an analysis of what is happening in the water and the soil as the meth trash lays there. Amy is working with the Sheriff's Department on training volunteers as they do river clean-ups, but there is no solution. This debris is dangerous and can be lethal depending on the form it is in when found. EPA is putting the focus on emerging chemicals through the GLRI funds, but this is a long term solution. Amy is looking for a short term solution. They are in the middle of the clean-ups with no agency or money to help with the disposal of meth debris they are finding.

**Next Steps** – Work needs to continue on the functional assessment and Matt will continue making presentations on the project as opportunities arise. The prioritization criteria needs to be reviewed, added to, and/or changed, so it is ready to use once the functional assessment is completed. Once sections of the watershed are completed, groups could begin looking at prioritizing those wetlands in those specific areas.

**Next Meeting** – The next quarterly meeting would occur in July, but FotSJR do not normally meet in July. There was consensus to hold the next meeting of the Wetland Partnership on Thursday, August 25 at 10:15 a.m. in the Three Rivers Public Library.

Notes recorded by Dona Hunter, FotSJR Secretary