

## ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION

### MINUTES June 2, 2015

The second quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission was held on June 2, 2015, in the Elkhart County Public Services Building, in Goshen, Indiana. Daragh Deegan, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Roll call was taken and it was noted a quorum was present with the following members in attendance:

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Daragh Deegan  
Dona Hunter  
Karla Kreczmer  
Jon Roberts  
Martin Franke  
Alfredo Garcia  
Ron Niezgodski  
Paula Reinhold  
Karl Kopec  
Kris Thomas  
Craig Williams  
Neil Ledet

**OTHERS PRESENT:** Joseph Zakas, Legal Representative, Thorne Grodnik LLP  
Dave Arrington, SNRT Inc., LaGrange, IN

Others in attendance are listed on the Attendance Sheet and made a part of these minutes.

### MINUTES OF MARCH 3, 2015

There were no corrections or additions to the minutes of the March 3, 2015 meeting. The following action was taken.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 3, 2015 MEETING WAS MADE BY MARTIN FRANKE AND SECONDED BY RON NIEZGODSKI. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### FINANCIALS

#### Financial Report

Lori Ratliff reviewed the SJRBC Financial Report for the period ending March 31, 2015 and then asked for any questions. There being none, Lori asked for the Commission's approval of the March 31, 2015 Financial Report.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE FINANCIAL REPORT AS PRESENTED WAS MADE BY CRAIG WILLIAMS AND SECONDED BY PAULA REINHOLD. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **Approval of Claims**

A list of the quarterly SJRBC claims and a description of the bills paid by MACOG were distributed to the Commission members for their review. Once approved, Ron Niezgodski, SJRBC Second Signatory Treasurer, signed the checks.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE SJRBC CLAIMS FOR THE JANUARY, FEBRUARY AND MARCH 2015 MACOG REIMBURSEMENTS AND FOR THE JUNE ATTORNEY FEE WAS MADE BY DONA HUNTER AND SECONDED BY MARTIN FRANKE. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **Banking Resolution**

Lori explained the bank in which the SJRBCs Certificate of Deposit is held, has changed hands several times, and consequently Old National can no longer find the signature card. Therefore, Lori presented a letter to the Board requesting a motion be made to create a new signature card.

MOTION WAS MADE BY RON NIEZGODSKI AND SECONDED BY DONA HUNTER TO APPROVE THE LETTER STATING THE SJRBC BOARD GIVES APPROVAL FOR JAMES TURNWALD, DEBORAH GARDNER, AND LORI RATLIFF TO BE LISTED AS SIGNERS ON ANY SAVINGS AND CERTIFICATE OF DEPOSIT ACCOUNTS HELD IN THE NAME OF THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Basin Updates – Basin Commission Members**

Martin Franke informed the Commission that the LaGrange County SWCD received a LARE grant for the third year in a row. It is for log jam removal on the Pigeon River.

Craig Williams reported the Steuben County SWCD has begun the implementation portion of the Pigeon Creek Watershed Management Plan. Steuben County SWCD is also applying for a 319 grant in the Pigeon River watershed and a LARE grant for the Fawn River.

Daragh Deegan announced a unique, cooperative LARE grant project between the City of Elkhart and Elkhart County. The project involves restoring portions of Yellow Creek in front of the Concord Mall. It will entail the creation of a two-stage ditch, which will improve water storage and water quality. Ron Niezgodski asked Daragh for an update on the dredging of the Goshen Pond. Daragh said the project was under budgeted. With the \$1 million that has been secured for the project, dredging of the Goshen Dam Pond will move forward and focus on priority areas. If addition funds become available, other areas of concern will be addressed.

#### **St. Joseph River Basin Filter Strip Initiative**

Jeremy discussed the progress of the St. Joseph River Basin Filter Strip Initiative. Since the last SJRBC meeting, the steering committee developed an application process and an application template, which was distributed to the Commission members for their review. The next step will be

to contact local county officials and explain the filter strip program and application process. Lastly, the steering committee will develop education and outreach materials on filter strips for local landowners interested in enrolling in the program. Daragh asked who would administer the filter strip program. Jeremy said applications would be made available through the SWCD, but most of the legwork would be provide by the county surveyor.

### **Regional Conservation Partnership Program**

Jeremy distributed a Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) summary sheet to the Commission members. He reiterated there is \$6.8 million in Farm Bill funds dedicated to the St. Joseph River Watershed (SJRW) for the next 5 years. The project is an innovative bi-state project addressing priority resource concerns in the SJRW. The primary resource concerns to be addressed are water quantity and water quality.

Thus far, the contracts have been signed, but the program is still in the administrative finance stage of the program. As the program progresses, it will be interesting to see how the River Basin Commission could get involved, along with 30 other non-profit organizations.

### **Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy**

Jeremy reported he and Zach Dripps completed the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy, last month. The academy focused on watershed efforts that improve water quality in Indiana. As part of the final project Jeremy and Zach developed an ArcGIS template in order to display water quality data on-line. Phase I water quality data was incorporated into the site. It is anticipated that the site will be beneficial for all levels of water quality use and education.

Martin Franke asked how long it takes to complete the course. Jeremy said it takes approximately 100 hours, over a 4 month period. Most of the time is distance learning that allows participants to learn in their own way, on their own time. Daragh asked if scholarship funds were available for the program. Jeremy said after looking at the budget for the upcoming year, it was determined there would be funding available to sponsor at least one individual a year. So for the 2016 academy, an application process will be created for people to apply. The first sponsorship would preferably be a Commission member. Paula and Martin said they might be interested in attending the program.

Jeremy asked if 3 Commission members would volunteer to be on a subcommittee, in order to help develop an application process and to review the applications once they are submitted. Daragh Deagan, Ron Niezgodski, and Paula Reinhold volunteered to be on the subcommittee.

### **LARE Grant Application – Cobus Creek**

Daragh reported it should be known by the end of June if the LARE grant request has been accepted to fund a watershed diagnostic study for Cobus Creek Watershed. However, the watershed is separated by the State Line, and LARE funding cannot be used in Michigan. So it would be necessary to look for further funds to do study work in Michigan.

### **Noble County Lake Gauges Support Letter**

Jeremy explained a letter describing the importance of the lake gauge located on the Sylvan Lake dam, in Noble County, has been drawn up and is awaiting approval. The letter also inquires about the future financial status of lake gauges within the St. Joseph River Watershed. Ron asked if Noble

County has found a solution to the dilemma. Jeremy said he spoke with a couple of people who thought the best solution would probably be to include the cost of the gauge into the county budget. Daragh requested to have the letter approved and sent to the IDNR, as soon as possible.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **2015-2016 Budget & Workplan**

Jeremy presented the Proposed Budget and Workplan for FY 2015-2016. A narrative of the workplan and a copy of the proposed budget were distributed to the Commission members for their review. The workplan and budget were similar to what was presented last year. It was noted that there was a transfer of funds to Contractual and Conference/Training to cover and increase in the water monitoring sampling program and the sponsorship of the Indiana Watershed Leadership Academy.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE PROPOSED FY 2015-2016 OPERATIONAL BUDGET AND WORKPLAN AS PRESENTED WAS MADE BY KARL KOPEC AND SECONDED BY CRAIG WILLIAMS. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **2015-2016 Contract for Services – Legal Counsel**

Jeremy reported that the 2-year legal contract between the St. Joseph River Basin Commission and Thorne, Grodnik, LLP would stay the same as the previous contract. Daragh Deegan, SJRBC Chairman, asked for a motion to approve the Legal Contract.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE LEGAL CONTRACT BETWEEN THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION AND THORNE GRODNIK LLP WAS MADE BY MARTIN FRANKE AND SECONDED BY DONA HUNTER. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **2015-2016 Contract for Services – Michiana Area Council of Governments**

Jeremy explained that the St. Joseph River Basin Commission enters into an Interlocal agreement with MACOG every two years for general services, which include River Basin staff, as well as other administrative services and equipment. The agreement is identical to the one agreed upon previously, with the exception of the dates.

MOTION TO APPROVE THE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION AND MACOG WAS MADE BY RON NIEZGODSKI AND CRAIG WILLIAMS. THE MOTION CARRIED.

### **IN-MI St. Joseph River Basin Symposium Recap**

Jeremy reported this year's Indiana-Michigan St. Joseph River Basin Symposium was a great success. The 70 people in attendance gave positive feedback regarding the interesting topics that were presented. Overall, the presentations were informative and the participants were glad they came.

### **“Wetlands Working for Your Community” Workshop**

Jeremy informed the Commission members of the “Wetlands Working For Your Community Workshop”, which will be held on June 18, 2015, in St. Joseph Michigan. The event will include a walking tour of the wetlands at Harbor Shores, a light dinner, followed by the workshop. Register online at [www.swmpc.org](http://www.swmpc.org).

### **2015-2016 Water Monitoring Sites**

Jeremy updated the Commission on the progress of the Water Monitoring Sites. There have been 20 new sampling sites selected for Phase II. The sites are located in the Elkhart River and Turkey Creek Watersheds. The expansion of more sites will make it possible to evaluate more headwaters and tributaries within the subwatersheds. So far, there has been 2 sample pulls from each site. The results look very good compared to Phase I. The goal for Phase III is to shift west, into Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties. Commission member were encouraged to suggest future sampling sites.

## **PRESENTATION**

### **SJRBC Water Monitoring Results – Elkhart River Watershed, Dave Arrington, SNRT Inc.**

Dave Arrington distributed the Phase I-SJRBC Water Quality Testing Program-Final Report. The first phase, of a three phase water testing program, began April 2014 and ended March 2015. All of the locations of the 10 sites sampled were in Noble County and were selected by the SJRBC.

Dave gave a brief overview of the results found. Sites 1 and 2 were two of the worst sites tested. The results clearly showed they were problematic sites, potentially due to large dairy operations upstream. They exhibited high Non-Point Source (NPS) pollutants for *E. coli*, nitrates-nitrites, total phosphorus, turbidity and total suspended solids. Sites 3, 4, and 5 were all culverts. Carp were observed at all three sites, which was what was believed to have caused some high numbers. Sites 6, 7, and 8 were also culverts. There were some higher numbers at these three sites, potentially due to livestock operations, White Sucker and Carp, and/or manure spreading. Site 9 was a bridge on Carrol Creek. Fields along this ditch had little or no buffering and had spring manure spreading, which was likely a major contributor of NPS contaminants found in the samples. Lastly, Site 10 was another bridge where there were higher numbers during wet weather samples, probably due to septic systems.

Overall, the report demonstrated there is a nutrient and sediment problem in the headwater regions of the Elkhart River system. It is apparent that the lake systems are playing a major role in containing a significant amount of the NPS problem, but it is certainly do to their degradation.

Phase II has begun with two sampling cycles completed on the 20 sites chosen. The data to date demonstrates the middle portion of the Elkhart River drainage to be much cleaner than the heavily livestock influenced headwaters.

Ron Niezgodski asked why sample sites were not selected near Lake Wawasee or Syracuse Lake. Dave said the local lake associations are doing their own sampling, and the data will be made available to us. Karl Kopec asked if the lake associations are interested in water quality in general, or are they trying to battle invasive plant species. Dave said they are interested in both, but his concern is only the water quality data coming from the two lakes. Martin asked what nutrient is the single greatest concern in testing thus far. Dave said phosphorus is a big concern, especially on Site 1.

Daragh asked if he ever encountered a site that was considered to have “reference conditions”. Dave said the Little Elkhart River and Pigeon River had a couple of sites that were good reference targets. Phase II may have a comparable control site. It would be a good goal to attain.

### **ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

Daragh Deegan informed the Commission that on Friday, June 5 the Elkhart River Restoration Association (ERRA) will auction 10 rain barrels, designed by local artist. Funds from the auction are shared by the artists and the ERRA, which focuses on improving water quality in the Elkhart River watershed.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business to come before the Basin Commission, the following action was taken.

MOTION TO ADJOURN WAS MADE BY CRAIG  
WILLIAMS AND SECONDED BY PAULA  
REINHOLD. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED.



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Daragh Deegan, Chairman