

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
September 7, 2023**

The third quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2023 was held on September 7th, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v= fIGojg7_Ew

Adam Bowden, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am in the absence of Chair Alicia Walsh. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself along with Kate Barrett and Ashley Matthews from the Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG). He briefly reviewed instructions for participation and discussed the purpose and makeup of the SJRBC. Roll call was taken, and it was noted a quorum was present with the following members in attendance:

VOTING MEMBERS PRESENT IN PERSON:

Vice Chair: Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka

Secretary: Jim Hess, Elkhart County

Peter Cook, LaGrange County

Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart

Mark Espich, St. Joseph County

Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend

Martin Franke, LaGrange County

Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County

Anita Hess, Noble County

Ray Hoover, Town of LaGrange

John Law, St. Joseph County

Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County

Sue McGee, City of Kendallville

Janel Meyer, Steuben County

Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County

Randy Sexton, Noble County

Jim Slabaugh, Steuben County

Kris Thomas, City of Angola

OTHERS PRESENT:

Todd Clark, Elkhart SWCD

Trevor Hampshire, City of Kendallville

Matt Horsley, Indiana DNR

Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen Stormwater

Jenna Meert, Stantec

Ryan Miller, City of Goshen Stormwater

Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik

Kate Barrett, MACOG

Ashley Matthews, MACOG

Matt Meersman, MACOG

CONSENT AGENDA

Adam Bowden, SJRBC Vice Chair, reminded members that they can request to have any item removed from the consent agenda if they believe it warrants its own separate vote.

Minutes – June 1, 2023

Adam asked the Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes of the June 1, 2023, meeting. Kris Thomas noted the second paragraph on page three of the minutes needs to specify that the Indiana State Department of Health will run analysis for caffeine at no cost. Hearing no other comments, Adam moved on to the next item on the consent agenda.

Financial Report

Matt presented the financial report for the final quarter of FY 2023 (04/01/23 – 06/30/23). Financial statements were provided to the members for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities (Profit & Loss). Matt stated the high interest rates have generated unexpected revenue and special project expenses were lower than budgeted due to working with the AmeriCorps program. The accounting services were also less than budgeted because Matt does most of the reporting and invoicing himself.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt noted the accounts payable was for services provided by MACOG for April, May, and June as well as legal expenses. Total Fund Balance for the FY 23 Q4 was \$352,509.89.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and reminded everyone that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 6/30/23. Matt said all local government appropriations have been received and noted that this is the first year SJRBC has received the full requested amount from all members.

Matt asked if there were any questions on the financial report. Hearing no questions, he moved on to the next item on the consent agenda.

Claims – September 7, 2023

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$57,263.94 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included invoices from MACOG for April, May, and June services, and Thorne Grodnik for quarterly legal services. There were also invoices from Tritium for water monitoring support, MBI for macro sample processing, expense reimbursement for Kate Barrett, and additional legal expenses related to HB1639 and PCB settlement checks. Brandie Ecker questioned the amount listed for the September 2023 meeting expenses. Matt said the amount listed is the old amount of \$350.00 and it will be corrected to \$450.00.

John Law stated the Annual Symposium was listed under income and asked what income was generated from it. He also asked about the expenses associated with the Symposium. Matt stated there was some income generated from the minimal charge to attend the Symposium. Some of the expenses were purchased by MACOG and on the MACOG invoices for services. Symposium expenses already paid by SJRBC were presented at the last meeting.

Matt noted all claims were related to projects already approved and included in the budget. Matt asked if there were any questions about the claims, or any other items from the consent agenda.

Hearing no other questions or comments, Adam called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA WITH
CORRECTION TO THE MEETING MINUTES AND LEGAL FEES.
DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Water Monitoring Program

Kate Barrett provided an update on the third year of the SJRBC Water Monitoring Program that concluded last month. There are 12 biological monitoring locations which are meant to complement existing efforts by various partners throughout the basin. Kate said participation

from interns and Ashley Matthews was very helpful in the water monitoring program. She explained that cinder blocks with stacked plates are used to attract macroinvertebrates. The cinder blocks are deployed at the beginning of the summer and are retrieved about six weeks later. The samples are then sent to Midwest Biodiversity Institute to analyze the macroinvertebrates and grade the health of each site. Kate will be working on a report to provide more details on the results.

Kate said a native mussel bed was discovered during the initial deployment of samplers on the North Branch of the Elkhart River at Delt Church Park. Natalie Fernandez, a graduate of the University of Notre Dame and SJRBC intern, suggested conducting a mussel survey. They coordinated with DNR biologists who assisted in conducting the survey along a 75 meter stretch of the North Branch of the Elkhart River. Kate said almost 300 native mussels were identified, counted and measured.

Kate then provided an update on her efforts to support members and partners with their strategic monitoring efforts. She has been working with various partners in Steuben County on their strategic water quality monitoring program which monitors 10 different sites on a weekly basis for 20 consecutive weeks. Two AmeriCorps members have assisted with data collection, including *E. coli*, nutrients, suspended solids and caffeine, at those sites. Kate explained that caffeine is being used as a demonstration project to see if the *E. coli* levels correlate with the caffeine levels. She said that if they find high *E. coli* levels where there are high caffeine levels, it could indicate human sources of *E. coli* which would lead to a more targeted corrective action. There are about six more weeks left of the program. Kate said they also applied for an Impact Grant through the Steuben County Community Foundation which would provide funding for three more years of the program.

Kate said she is working on a similar water quality monitoring program in LaGrange County. She has worked closely with Martin Franke and Pat Wilshire to put together a proposal for another Impact Grant, which was submitted at the beginning of the month.

In addition to the water monitoring program, Kate noted several outreach and education efforts she has participated in. She provided Hoosier Riverwatch training for the Holy Cross College Saints and Scholars program, and participated in the Middlebury Riverfest. She also presented at an Indiana Master Naturalist program and participated in an educational event at Wellfield Botanic Gardens. Last week, Kate helped with the Grassy Creek Raft Journey in Kosciusko County. She said she has several Hoosier Riverwatch workshops coming up and she will be presenting at the Environmental Education Association of Indiana Annual Conference.

Kate is also working on an inventory of water monitoring efforts. She is hoping to have a draft report next year summarizing water trends and other data. Kate said these efforts are made possible in part due to the newest AmeriCorps member, Shae Medlen. Shae will be assisting Kate with the biological water monitoring program, watershed data inventory, data interpretation and conducting interviews. Matt noted there is a strong water monitoring program in the urban area led by Daragh Deegan with the support of the cities of South Bend and Elkhart. He said it is important to identify where the gaps in data exist geographically. Martin Franke asked if SJRBC

is aware of any data being collected on the Michigan side of the basin. Kate said she was given some contacts to see what data has been collected in that area and will look into it further.

Matt stated that since the last meeting, Tritium has installed additional water level monitoring devices for three sites in the North Branch of the Elkhart River and one site on the Fawn River. Tritium is taking field measurements to develop stage-discharge curves for all sites that will be used to calculate the volume and rate of water moving through each site. Matt said that Steuben County decided to obligate the funds they received from the Monsanto settlement to conduct additional flow monitoring in their county. He explained that SJRBC will purchase the equipment and pay for the annual service fees, while Steuben County will pay for the installation and development of the stage-discharge curves at each site. Matt intends to offer the same opportunity to other communities who received a settlement from Monsanto. Jim Slabaugh agreed that additional flow monitoring would be helpful for educating and communicating with landowners as well.

Water Study and Implementation Plan

Matt said there is still discussion of developing an RFP for assistance and support of a water study and implementation plan. The study would assess existing green infrastructure and quantify functional value. The implementation plan would identify the costs and priority areas for green infrastructure investment. Matt would like to develop a prioritized project list to determine how funds would be spent if they were available.

NEW BUSINESS

2024 Meeting Schedule

Matt presented the 2024 SJRBC meeting schedule with some slight changes to the usual first Thursday in March, June, September and December. Due to scheduling conflicts, Matt proposed moving the March meeting to March 14 and the June meeting to May 30. Therefore, the meeting schedule for 2024 would be March 14, May 30, September 5 and December 5.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO APPROVE THE 2024 MEETING SCHEDULE.
RANDY SEXTON SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Watershed Leadership Academy

Matt stated that SJRBC budgeted funds to provide financial support for 2 individuals from the basin to attend the Watershed Leadership Academy hosted by Purdue University. There is an application for individuals interested who either work or volunteer within the St. Joseph River Basin. The Friends of the St. Joe River Association is also providing support for an additional 2 individuals to attend. Matt would like to have a couple of volunteers to help him review applications. John Law and Ray Hoover volunteered to assist Matt. Matt will email an announcement next week with more information and a link to the application.

Other Business/Updates

Matt discussed the Indiana Resilience Funding Hub (IRFH) which helps Hoosier communities pursue federal funding opportunities for climate, energy and resilience projects. Matt said there is awareness that smaller communities often do not have the capacity to apply for grants and the IRFH can assist them with those opportunities and the application process. He provided contact

information for Bill Brown (brownwm@indiana.edu) and Cate Racek (cracek@indiana.edu) for anyone who has further questions or would like more information.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt informed everyone that he has been working on several administrative tasks this past quarter including onboarding for new members, working with Michigan partners on a lakes and trees project, and engagement with legislators regarding Watershed Development Commissions. Noble County and the West Lakes Association have had an interest in pursuing a Conservancy District to fund different actions. Matt has met with Noble County Commissioners to discuss the development of a Watershed Development Commission as another option for funding projects. Additionally, Matt has been involved in education with riparian vegetation management in South Bend, Mishawaka, Elkhart and Goshen.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

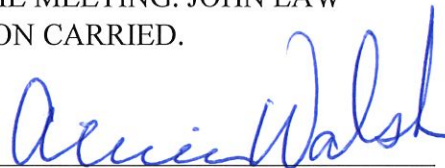
Jason Kauffman notified the Commission that the Elkhart River Restoration Association will hold a meeting and ice cream social on Sunday, September 10.

Martin Franke said the LaGrange County Soil and Water Conservation District Forestry Field Day will be held on September 30 from 9am to 1pm.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Adam Bowden called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. JOHN LAW
SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.



Alicia Walsh, SJRBC Chair