

ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 14, 2024

The first quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2024 was held on March 14th, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYVpY6JJM80>

Adam Bowden, SJRBC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself along with 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:

Chair: Adam Bowden, City of Mishawaka

Vice Chair: Jim Hess, Elkhart County

Secretary: Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County

Treasurer: Ray Hoover, Town of LaGrange

Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart

Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend

Bill Hartsuff, Elkhart County

Matt Horsley, Indiana DNR

Chad Jonsson, Town of Syracuse

Clint Knauer, Steuben County

Greg Knauer, Steuben County

John Law, St. Joseph County

Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County

Sue McGee, City of Kendallville

Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County

Jarod Nisely, LaGrange County

Randy Sexton, Noble County

Cory Stewart, LaGrange County

Kris Thomas, City of Angola

OTHERS PRESENT:

Donny Aleo, Elkhart Co. Parks

Jason Arme, Steuben Co. HD

Todd Clark, Elkhart Co. SWCD

Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen Stormwater

Ryan Miller, City of Goshen Stormwater

Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik

Ashley Matthews, MACOG

Matt Meersman, MACOG

CONSENT AGENDA

Adam Bowden, SJRBC 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 – December 7, 2023

Adam asked the Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes of the December 7, 2023, meeting. Hearing no comments, Adam moved on to the next item on the consent agenda.

Financial Report

Matt presented the financial report for the second quarter of FY 2024 (10/01/23 – 12/31/23). 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 there was \$17,000 of income from Steuben County for the water monitoring cost-share program. He expects an increase in expenses under Special Projects for biological monitoring and expanded

flow monitoring. There is also an increase under additional MACOG staff for AmeriCorps service site fees for Shae Medlen.

The Statement of Net Assets (Balance Sheet) was then presented. Matt noted the accounts payable was for services provided by MACOG for October, November, and December as well as legal expenses. Total Fund Balance for FY24 Q2 was \$383,272.84.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and reminded everyone that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 12/31/23. Matt noted appropriation requests were sent to members in February and payments are starting to come in.

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 – March 14, 2024

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$20,238.41 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included invoices from MACOG for October, November, and December services, and Thorne Grodnik for quarterly legal services.

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.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.
DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

OLD BUSINESS

Water Monitoring Program

Matt provided an update on the SJRBC Water Monitoring Program. He said Kate is continuing to work with Steuben County on their strategic water quality sampling program and will add 10 additional sites, for a total of 20 sites, in 2024.

Matt said Kate has also worked on a similar water quality sampling program in LaGrange County. She is working with LaGrange County SWCD to launch the program in June and will update the Commission at the next meeting. Matt noted Kate has been successful in securing grants to help purchase water monitoring equipment.

Matt then highlighted several of Kate's outreach and education efforts. He said she recently worked on Envirothon, a competitive learning event for high school-aged students and presented at the Pay Dirt Conference in Elkhart County. Kate and Shae also participated in the Goshen Flood Awareness Meeting and the Unity Gardens Growing Summit. Matt stated he will be speaking at the AmeriCorps Day of Service event to celebrate their 30th anniversary. Kate and Matt will both be presenting at next week's Indiana Lake Management Society Conference. Kate will also host two upcoming Hoosier RiverWatch Basic Workshops on April 28 and May 19.

Matt said Kate is still waiting on the data from the macroinvertebrates samples taken last year. She expects the results later this spring and will be able to establish baseline scores of stream

health with the three years of sampling data. Kate will continue working on an inventory of water monitoring efforts in the basin.

Matt said the interactive web map is now live and encouraged Commission members to provide feedback. There is a lot of data on the site and Matt and Kate would like to make it as user-friendly as possible.

Matt announced the Bowman Creek Watershed Study in collaboration with Notre Dame. Notre Dame will sponsor new water monitoring and have students work on modeling to see if land cover and other data can predict downstream changes. Matt said it is a small scale pilot project of what the Commission might be able to do across the entire watershed.

Matt said in addition to support of the USGS gauge on Waldron Lake and the sensors on Phillips Ditch, there are now real-time water level monitoring devices at three sites in the North Branch of the Elkhart River (NBER) watershed and one site on the Fawn River. The sites on the NBER were recommended on page 40 of the Flood Risk Management Plan and the site on the Fawn River was requested by the City of Angola following their water study. Tritium has been taking field measurements in order to develop stage-discharge curves for all the sites to calculate the volume/rate of water at each site.

Matt said that the Town of Bristol and the City of Angola have signed MOUs to participate in the cost-share opportunity using funds from the Monsanto PCB settlement. He said SJRBC will pay for the water level monitoring equipment and annual service and the local government will pay for the installation and stage-curve development as detailed in the MOU presented. Matt also presented the opportunity to the Town of Osceola.

Watershed Study

Matt said he would like to solicit proposals for a study focused on watershed factors such as land management practices, soil conditions, vegetation, and drainage improvement. Ideally the study could be used to develop a model for predicting the impact of changes in watershed conditions and used to make informed water management decisions. Matt said he has not made any progress since the last meeting, but he will continue working on it. He would like to review the project with the MACOG Executive Director. Adam asked if the project could potentially be broken up into smaller projects without going through the RFP process. Jim Hess will also send Matt information on a project already being done that is very similar to what Matt is describing.

24th Annual Symposium

Matt said the St. Joseph River Basin Symposium will be held on Friday, May 10, at the Covered Bridge Farm Park in Centreville, Michigan. The Symposium will be held in coordination with the Watershed Celebration. He is still looking for suggestions for topics and speakers. One of the topics suggested was water availability and the Great Lakes Compact.

NEW BUSINESS

Legislative Updates

Matt said the House Enrolled Act No. 1383 was signed by the Governor and reclassifies a lot of wetlands to not require any mitigation. Matt said the Wetland Task Force Report had tried to

align the State Wetland Program with the federal program which would have gotten rid of the class system for wetlands. He said Senate Bill 246, which was sponsored by Senator Glick, was passed. Senate Bill 246 allows wetlands as small as a half-acre to be enrolled in Indiana's Classified Forest and Wildlands Program, which provides financial incentive to encourage watershed protection and wildlife habitat management on private lands in Indiana.

Matt discussed Senate Bill 105 and 140. He said Senate Bill 140 provides certain guidelines for cutting, relocating, or removing logs that are crossways in a channel without obtaining a permit from the DNR. Senate Bill 105 authorizes the Department of Agriculture to oversee the process to update the Indiana Drainage Handbook. It also authorizes the Department of Agriculture to select a contractor to draft the updated version of the handbook. Matt said an advisory committee was created to advise the contractor and the department and to review and provide non-binding comments on the structure and text of the drafts of the updated handbook. The advisory committee must include representatives of certain organizations and state agencies.

Matt then discussed House Bill 1329 and 1399. House Bill 1329 was originally proposed to prevent a local health department or other government entities from requiring inspections of a property's septic system where there is a sale or transfer of property. The final draft retained the septic system language. House Bill 1399 was proposed to change Indiana's definition of PFAS chemicals and required the Environmental Rules Board to use the definition in certain rules concerning industrial processes and research development. Matt said House Bill 1399, also known as the PFAS Bill, was tabled.

Matt said the Noble County Commissioners suspended the Stormwater and Drainage Ordinance for agricultural land as well as some residential land. Some people argued that the ordinance was never intended to regulate agricultural land, even though the ordinance has always stated otherwise. A committee was tasked with creating a new and better ordinance. In the meantime, most agriculture and residential properties are exempt from all stormwater and erosion requirements, which is creating concern for Noble County residents in floodprone areas.

Matt encouraged Commission members to reach out to him if they would like him to advocate on their behalf regarding local policies or legislative issues.

Other Business/Updates

Jim Hess thanked Kate for speaking at the Pay Dirt Event held earlier this month.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Matt announced that he received an hourly wage increase effective March 1. The budget will readjust for the wage increase in June.

Matt reported that he has been working on administrative tasks this past quarter including reporting for the State Board of Accounts, web updates, and onboarding for new Commission members. He has provided assistance in the coordination of a riparian vegetation management

education effort along with several communities along the St. Joseph and Elkhart rivers. Matt also hosted a Juday Creek Task Force meeting last night and met with West Lakes Association representatives to explore forming a conservancy district. Matt and John Law have also met with stakeholders regarding the dredging of Baugo Bay in Osceola.

ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

Adam asked if there were any items from the floor. Hearing none, he moved on to the next item on the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

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

RAY HOOVER MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. JEWEL WISE
SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

Adam Bowden, SJRBC Chair

F:\ABC\SJRBC\MEETINGS\2024\Q4\Minutes\SJRBC_Minutes_March2024.docx