

**ST. JOSEPH RIVER BASIN COMMISSION**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**March 5, 2026**

The first quarterly meeting of the St. Joseph River Basin Commission (SJRBC) in 2026 was held on March 5<sup>th</sup>, at the Schrock Pavilion in Goshen. The meeting was also livestreamed on YouTube and made available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0VhK7frdEKE>

Jewel Wise, SJRBC Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 am. Matt Meersman, River Basin Director, introduced himself 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:**

<i>Chair:</i> Jewel Wise, Kosciusko County	Chad Jonsson, Town of Syracuse
<i>Vice Chair:</i> Randy Sexton, Noble County	Clint Knauer, Steuben County
<i>Secretary:</i> Sarah Longenecker, St. Joseph County	John Law, St. Joseph County
<i>Treasurer:</i> Jim Moyer, Kosciusko County	Briannah McCall, St. Joseph County
Daragh Deegan, City of Elkhart	Janel Meyer, Steuben County
Kieran Fahey, City of South Bend	Jon Roberts, Kosciusko County
Tony Hazen, St. Joseph County	Cory Stewart, LaGrange County
Jim Hess, Elkhart County	Kris Thomas, City of Angola
Matt Horsley, Indiana DNR	Alicia Walsh, Steuben County

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Todd Clark, Elkhart Co. SWCD	Ryan Miller, City of Goshen
Vince Gresham, Elkhart Co. Parks	Michael Novotney, Wessler Engineering
Jason Kauffman, City of Goshen	Brea Persing, Elkhart Co. SWCD
Manda Kleeberg, Steuben Co. HD	Abbi Schrader, Indiana DNR
Natasha Weisenbeck, Elkhart Co. Planning	Brandie Ecker, Thorne Grodnik
Emily Maggart, Wawasee Area Conservancy	Ashley Matthews, MACOG
Matthew McLaughlin, ITR	Matt Meersman, MACOG

**CONSENT AGENDA**

Jewel Wise, SJRBC Chair, introduced the consent agenda and reminded members that they can request to have any item removed if they believe it warrants its own separate vote.

**Minutes – December 4, 2025**

Jewel asked Commission members if there were any comments or questions about the minutes from December 4. Hearing none, Jewel asked Matt to review the financial statements.

**Financial Report**

Matt presented the financial report for the second quarter of FY 2026 (10/01/25 – 12/31/25). Financial statements were provided to the members for review in advance of the meeting.

Matt discussed the Statement of Financial Activities. He noted that invoices for all local government appropriations were sent out in February. Matt said he is expecting about \$45,000 in

water monitoring expenses, which includes USGS gage support, macroinvertebrate sampling, telemetry system service, and curve maintenance. Approximately \$7000 of expenses are expected for Americorps program support. Expenses on the statement include project-related mileage, technical strategy development, and Watershed Leadership Academy support.

The Statement of Net Assets was then presented. Accounts Payable are for services provided by MACOG from October through December. The total Fund Balance was \$493,206.66.

Matt reviewed the Statement of Cash Flows and reminded everyone that the statement is prepared on a cash basis ending on 12/31/25. Matt noted that this statement includes expenses from last fiscal year and local government appropriation requests were sent in February.

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 5, 2025**

A list of the quarterly claims and associated invoices totaling \$36,091.86 was distributed to the SJRBC members for review prior to the meeting. Claims included accounts payable invoices for MACOG services, as well as the strategic planning project, water monitoring, the watershed leadership academy, Michiana Irrigation Association workshop registration, maintenance for water sensors, member support, and legal counsel.

Matt asked if there were any questions about the claims, or other items from the consent agenda. Hearing no questions or comments, Jewel called for a motion to approve the consent agenda.

RANDY SEXTON MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA.  
JIM HESS SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **Water Monitoring Program**

Matt provided an update on SJRBC water monitoring efforts. He reminded the Commission that the cost of MBI services increased this year because MBI conducted the fieldwork in addition to macroinvertebrate processing. Matt explained that the macroinvertebrates present in the streams provide an indication of the overall biological health of those streams, but bacteria and E. coli are not included in the monitoring. He said the 2025 data from MBI and the invoice should be ready in April or May. He has been working with Dr. Kate Barrett, Ashley Matthews, and Raj Parikh to process the Elkhart County Health Department's 2024 and 2025 data and upload the 2022-2024 MBI data to the webmap.

Matt said he anticipates SJRBC supporting up to two AmeriCorps members to assist Steuben County with their strategic water quality monitoring program. SJRBC also provided financial support to LaGrange County SWCD, hiring a consultant to analyze and interpret 2024 water quality data using the funds previously budgeted for the AmeriCorps program.

Matt provided an overview of water quantity monitoring efforts through USGS gauges and eight SJRBC sponsored sensors throughout the basin. Tritium has been taking field measurements at each of the SJRBC sites in order to develop stage-discharge curves, which allow the estimate of the volume/discharge at each site. Matt stated that maintaining the current sites costs about

\$20,000 annually, with the largest expense being the required field measurements to convert water level to discharge. Establishing a new site is estimated to cost \$8,000 to \$9,000, followed by approximately \$3,000 annually for maintenance. Matt is expecting about \$45,000 of additional water monitoring expenses this year: \$4,500 for the USGS gage on Waldron Lake, \$22,000 for the macroinvertebrate program, \$3,500 for telemetry system cell service on SJRBC gages, and \$16,000 for curve maintenance at all eight of those sites. Matt would like to request approval to accept the Tritium proposal for curve maintenance, with the cost of about \$16,000, as well as the expected MBI invoice for up to \$22,000.

ALICIA WALSH MOVED TO APPROVE ADDITIONAL COSTS UP TO \$17,000 FOR TRITIUM CURVE MAINTENANCE. JOHN LAW SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Matt then discussed the possibility of expanding the water monitoring program by partnering with the City of Goshen to establish four new stream gaging sites this year. The cost share involves purchasing the actual sensors and covering future maintenance costs, while the partner pays for the installation costs and the first year's development of the stage discharge curve. The Commission has about \$10,000 budgeted for their portion of the installation costs upfront, but would need an additional \$24,000, requiring a budget amendment and future reimbursement. Matt discussed the long-term annual maintenance cost for a network of 12 sites, which is estimated to be around \$30,000. He believes there is enough financial stability to justify the expense, but the Commission should decide whether to make the investment. Jim Hess asked how communities are using the data, and Matt provided an example of how St. Joseph County is using it to design a potential flood mitigation strategy for the Jewel Woods neighborhood.

Matt then proposed a budget amendment to accommodate the establishment of up to four new SJRBC gage sites and data analysis support for LaGrange County. The request included increasing the water monitoring expense line item from \$58,000 to \$83,000, increasing member/partner support from \$4,000 to \$9,000, increasing special projects revenue from \$170 to \$25,170, and decreasing the additional staff line item from \$40,000 to \$35,000 to maintain the same budgeted change in net assets. Alicia asked for clarification on the purchasing protocol, to which Matt replied that the purchase of new hardware would only occur after a signed agreement is in place for cost sharing with the City of Goshen.

JOHN LAW MOVED TO APPROVE THE BUDGET AMENDMENT AS PRESENTED TO ACCOMMODATE THE EXPANSION OF THE WATER MONITORING PROGRAM. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Matt then requested a motion to approve the purchase of up to four new sensors and paying the associated establishment costs if a cost-share agreement is executed with the City of Goshen.

JOHN LAW MOVED TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF UP TO FOUR NEW SENSORS AND ASSOCIATED ESTABLISHMENT COSTS WITH A SIGNED COST-SHARE AGREEMENT. DARAGH DEEGAN SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

Brandie Ecker noted that approval was still needed to pay the expected MBI invoice. Matt requested a motion to approve the MBI invoice.

JANEL MEYER MOVED TO APPROVE PAYMENT OF THE EXPECTED MBI INVOICE FOR UP TO \$22,000. KIERAN FAHEY SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIED.

### **Watershed Study**

Matt provided an update on the technical strategy and workplan development. He originally envisioned the study as a model to evaluate green infrastructure. This type of model could be updated regularly to account for changes over time, incorporate actual weather and stream discharge data, and possibly “learn” how water moves in the basin. Although the study will explore such a model, it will do so in comparison to other efforts the Commission could pursue. He reminded the Commission that the water demand/availability analysis component would no longer be part of the study, as the State is completing that portion for our area.

Matt met with Intera/Northwater in February to discuss formatting and dashboard examples. They reported they are close to having a deliverable draft that will define and prioritize different types of studies or tools, including methodologies, level of effort, cost estimates, durations, and funding strategies.

Matt then discussed related efforts in the basin. The University of Notre Dame is leading a project to add up to ten new sensors to support refinement of a Soil and Water Assessment (SWAT) model. The model aims to help researchers understand how nuanced changes in land use, such as the adoption of no-till practices or field tilling, impact downstream gauge readings.

The Commission proceeded to discuss the impact of agricultural tiling on water flow, noting that the conventional understanding suggests increased water flow; however, there is an opposing view that tiling can increase soil capacity to hold water during rain events. They concluded that while tiling may reduce initial sheet flow runoff, it does not change the fact that more water is added to the system over time, requiring receiving water bodies to handle the additional flow.

Matt said he was contacted by Yi Ding, a researcher from Purdue University, who is developing a proposal for the Great Lakes Protection Fund to create a water and energy signaling tool for the St. Joseph River Basin as a test case. The research highlighted that energy production accounts for about 70% of water use, though much of this is non-consumptive, and they are seeking an element other than economic drivers for making energy management decisions.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **26<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium**

Matt announced the 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium will be held at the Pokagon Band Community Center in Dowagiac, MI. He is still looking for topic and speaker suggestions. The Friends of the St. Joe River Assoc. will hold their “Watershed Celebration” at the same location in the evening.

### **Legislative Update – SB 224**

Matt discussed the impact of House Bill 224 on River Basin Commissions. It creates only small changes for the SJRBC, such as prohibiting the exercise of statutory powers within a nature

preserve and changing its “rulemaking authority” to the power to “adopt a resolution regarding” specific issues, such as requiring the impoundment of increased water runoff from new construction. The bill requires no action from the Commission.

### **Regional Water Planning Meeting**

Matt announced that a regional water planning meeting will be held on April 7 in Fort Wayne to gather stakeholder input on Governor Braun’s Executive Order 25-63 regarding regional water management. He encouraged Commission members to attend to voice their agreement that their existing commission structure is valuable for regional collaboration.

### **Other Business/Updates**

Jim Hess thanked everyone who participated in the Pay Dirt event.

### **DIRECTOR’S REPORT**

Matt reported on several administrative tasks over the last quarter. He attended a Drainage Handbook Advisory Board meeting on December 18 and is awaiting permission to share a draft of the handbook with stakeholders. He has also spent time on state agency filings, such as Gateway reporting and grant receivable certifications.

Matt shared that he has also provided support for the LaGrange County Surveyor’s Office, including work on drain apportionment. He noted that the drain apportionment tool is outdated and the Commission will need to decide whether to invest in updating the existing tool or develop a new one as part of their technical strategy.

Matt also provided highlights from Juday Creek Task Force meetings regarding a new data center being built along Juday Creek, a significant coldwater tributary in St. Joseph County. The developer, Microsoft, has committed to using municipal water rather than on-site wells and has designed stormwater systems to capture 60% more runoff than the current land use. The task force encouraged project developers to consider allowing the floodplain and area next to the creek to be excluded from development and designated as a green space buffer. They have initially agreed to set aside approximately 300 acres of the site for this purpose.

### **ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR**

Jewel asked if there were any items from the floor. Hearing none, she moved to the next item.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Jewel Wise called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

JOHN LAW MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. DARAGH DEEGAN  
SECONDED. ALL IN FAVOR. THE MOTION CARRIED.

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Jewel Wise, SJRBC Chair