

**Muskegon River Watershed Assembly
Resource Committee Meeting Minutes
April 30, 2009
Muskegon State Game Area**

MRWA Executive Director Gary Noble convened the meeting at 5:35 p.m. The following were present:

Wayne Groesbeck, MRWA Ex. Bd. Chair
Dana Strouse, MDEQ
Don Snyder, Kalamazoo Chpt. of TU

Rich O'Neal, MDNR-Fisheries Division
Gary Noble, MRWA Executive Director
Terry Stilson, MRWA Program Coordinator

Review Agenda

Noble noted that Old Business, 3.a. should read "...funded effort in Cedar Creek" instead of "MRW"

Approval of Minutes

Groesbeck motioned to approve the May 1, 2008 Resource Committee meeting minutes, as submitted, with Snyder supporting the motion. Motion passed.

On-Going Projects/Opportunities/Activities – a list was previously emailed to Committee members for their review.

Old Business

USFS Sediment Basin Program status – update on HIA funded effort in Cedar Creek – Noble reported:

- USFS had a crew from the Upper Peninsula clean out the sand traps last year
- USFS applied for HIA monies thru DNR to continue cleaning the sand traps (among other tasks)
- The project was funded for two years

O'Neal noted that it is important that the sand traps are emptied because of the hydrology study that is being completed on Cedar Creek.

MR Mainstem Habitat Evaluation – Noble reported that Huron Pines RC&D is completing this evaluation through the DNR. Brad Jensen from Huron Pines will give a report on this at the next MRWA Meeting-at-Large.

- O'Neal added that 20% of the Muskegon River length will be evaluated using one mile increments.
- (Evaluation) protocols were just completed (and determining the need for) woody material is the main (focus).

Road/Stream Crossings & Culverts funding opportunity thru USFWS Fish Passage Program – Noble reported:

- If the same cycle is used – pre-proposals will be required in February 2010
- Need to start thinking if we want to do a pre-proposal
- Need to identify target areas
 - Felch Road – Newaygo County (O'Neal)
 - 40th Ave. over Bigelow Creek – Newaygo County (O'Neal)
 - Maple River/Maple Island – Muskegon/Newaygo Counties (Noble)
 - O'Neal responded that a hydrology study would need to be done first at this site
 - Need to determine all effects if this was done, (including impact on existing wild rice and existing wastewater discharge)
 - **Noble will ask the Newaygo Road Commission for more information.**
 - O'Neal added:

- The MRWA needs to prioritize the perch culverts and then select the ones that should be worked on
- Could ask if USFWS monies would pay for the prioritization effort
- Could focus on Newaygo and Muskegon Counties where Road/Stream Crossing surveys have been done
- Strouse added:
 - The DEQ is talking about opening the 319 monies to repair road/stream crossings as well as dam removal projects but it probably won't be added to the RFP this year.
- Noble noted Penoyer Creek culvert (Newaygo County) is another (perched) culvert to consider

Bridgeton Twp. Boat Launch Upgrade Plans – Groesbeck reported talking with Township representative, Susan Reagan, about this boat launch. She said that the Township has been discussing their upgrade plans with the DNR.

- **O'Neal said he would check on it.**
- Groesbeck added that Bridgeton Township will have their "River Runs Through It" Festival in June.

Ongoing Project/Opportunities/Activities – distributed earlier.

New Business/Initiatives

Education Related – Stilson reported:

- Fishing Days with Tri-County Elementary (Montcalm County) – May 7 & 8 – MRWA in charge of the education sessions.
- Water Fairs at Camp Newaygo (Newaygo County) – May 12, 14, 15 & Twin Lake Elementary (Muskegon County) – May 28
- MRW Activity Book that will be distributed to all 4th grade students in the Watershed
- MiCorps Water Monitoring Training – Holton (Muskegon County) – June 6
- Second MRWA Teacher Training at Camp Newaygo (Newaygo County) – September 29

MRW Research Findings – Noble distributed copies of the MR Futures bulletins and PowerPoint slides noting Low, High and Highest Priority sub-watersheds. He read the seven general recommendations:

1. Controlling the rate of urban sprawl is the single most potent tool available to protect the river's future, its fishery and its receiving waters (including Lake MI)
2. Maximizing forest cover in the future will provide substantial mitigation of the effects of urban and agricultural development
3. Maximizing farmland preservation in an ecologically sound manner requires a simultaneous reduction in rates of urban sprawl
4. Rigorous riparian setback rules provide real ecological value, but cannot compensate for extensive watershed development
5. Prospect of climate change makes rational land use planning all the more imperative
6. River faces a future of increasing flows and erosion throughout most of the watershed: this suggests we need to closely evaluate future bank stabilization and sediment trapping where it can be justified (total costs vs. expected site specific benefits) and these projects need to be designed for a widely destabilized channel system
7. Three hydroelectric dams on river main stem provide important social and economic benefits, but also exact a steep price on ecological function and fisheries.

Conservation District's Program – Noble reported that he is trying to "maximize forest cover" by participating in a program with the Newaygo Conservation District, who has field crews available for conservation enhancements. He has submitted an application to them to secure a crew to plant trees in Newaygo County using MRWA funds to purchase trees.

MRWA Next Steps Action Plan – Noble distributed the proposal that was submitted to the GLFT and read the six targets and action items. He also read from the five project objectives:

1. Engage Stakeholders through Communication and Outreach
2. Integrate MREMS with the MRW Management Plan
3. Implement Action Plans for Upper, Middle and Lower Watershed
4. Coordinate Science-Policy Integration
5. Integrate MREMS Research Activities as a Component of a Sustainability Strategy

He noted:

- MRWA is basically trying to do what the 2001 (GLFT/Wege) capacity building grant wanted – to receive the research and distribute it
- Develop an ongoing program for ecosystem management
- Plan is to go from large-scale study to large-scale action with MRWA as primary facilitator
- MRWA will hire a third full-time employee
- Whole project is just under \$500,000 with MRWA getting approximately \$160,000 and GVSU-AWRI will get \$338,000
- Researchers helped write the research-based action targets and they are from the researchers' perspectives
 - O'Neal asked why the researchers thought urban sprawl has the most effects on the watershed
 - Noble answered – because of deforestation and runoff
 - O'Neal noted Action #4 – bank stabilization and sediment load trapping have not occurred (to any great extent) on the Muskegon River
- Noble reported that the proposal was submitted the previous week and GLFT will meet on May 5. The proposal is on their agenda but he doesn't know if they will make a decision then.
 - O'Neal added that he is disappointed that the bulletins are the only result from all the research. He thought the public would have more access to the data and not need to contact the researchers every time some data is needed.

The next Resource Committee meeting will be scheduled as needed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Stilson
Program Coordinator