

**Muskegon River Watershed Assembly
Resource/Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
April 22, 2014**

Muskegon State Game Area (MDNR) Office

*****These minutes are not official until approved at the next regular meeting*****

Committee Chair Kadelsik convened the meeting at 5:08 p.m. Introductions were given. The following were present:

Jeff Auch, Muskegon CD	Rich O'Neal, DNR-Fisheries Division
Kathy Evans, WMSRDC-MLWP	Roger Peacock, Maple Island Restoration
Ken Johnson, MRWA Treasurer	Tom Walter, USFS-Baldwin
John Koches, GVSU-AWRI	Dixie Ward, MRWA Project Manager
Ron Kadelsik, MRWA Resource Comm. Chair	Chuck Woods, N. Muskegon City Council
Gary Noble, MRWA Executive Director	

Review Agenda

- No changes were made.

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Johnson, support by Woods to approve the October 7, 2013 Resource Committee meeting minutes, as submitted. **Motion passed.**

Committee Purpose & Possible Format

a. Current Job Description for Committee

- Kadelsik asked if the future of the Resource Committee should stay the same or change and asked for input.
- Woods asked if the Resource Committee was fulfilling the language of the goals we currently have.
- Noble stated that the word 'data' was added to the purpose/goals recently to absorb certain tasks from the dissolved "Data Repository Committee".

b. Possible Changes (from internal discussions)

- Johnson stated to continue as is and keep the September meeting.
- Kadelsik stated that an option is to send an Executive Director (type) report on a quarterly basis so the committee can see what projects are being funded.
- Noble stated we are back to two meetings (spring and fall).
- Noble stated we can form sub-committees as needed to address issues or focus on project development, as this committee has done in the past.
- Noble commented we may want to include our Scientific Advisory Board (academic research partners) on our distribution list.
- Koches suggested having our academic research partners (Muskegon Watershed Research Partnership) engaged in future committee meetings or institute periodic/regular conference calls or set up another half-day conference every 2 years or so where researchers gather to review what they've been working on & discuss gaps in research & research needs.
- Noble suggested to start with sending the research partnership our minutes plus a quarterly conference call.
- Evans stated that maybe MLWP should have a more formal connection with MRWA.

c. Meeting Frequency (revised)

- Noble suggested to keep two face to face meetings a year.
- Noble asked if there was a need to change the name of the committee.
- Evans suggested to add the word 'Advisory' to the name of the committee.

- **Committee consensus to use the full name for the committee & add “Advisory”, so it reads, “Resource/Technical Advisory Committee”, which should help clarify the committee’s purpose to others.**
- **Committee consensus to keep its purpose/goals as is & to continue meeting face to face twice a year (Spring & Fall).**
- **Committee consensus to continue playing a role in project development, but assumes that project ideas would also be generated by other MRWA committees & staff.**

Old Business

a. Committee Priorities (& some current efforts addressing priority areas)

i. Protection & Restoration of Natural Hydrologic Function

Cedar Creek Ecosystem Protection & Restoration Initiative

- Noble stated FTCH (engineering) partnered with MRWA, DNR, & MCD to do some hydrologic work and developed rough costs to implement regional detention / retention except for land acquisition costs which are still pending.
- Noble stated areas have been identified near three drains and we need to acquire property to do work, determine cost of land acquisition then we would have a budget to go to funders.
- Noble stated that it is roughly a million dollar effort to do what we want in Cedar Creek.
- Evans stated there is a new source of funding available for hazard mitigation through FEMA for environmental improvements for prevention or disaster, including road/stream crossing improvements.
- **Noble to contact Evans to arrange a meeting with other Muskegon County partners to discuss the Cedar Creek initiative and on-going road/stream crossing inventory work.**

Small Dam Removal / Workshops

- Noble stated MRWA is making an effort to work with small dam owners and recently hosted a “Dam Workshop” on 1/19 where 19 dam owners attended.
- Kadelsik stated the Miller/Narton Dam owner in Reed City came to the Dam Workshop and is considering removing the dam or converting it to a small hydroelectric dam.

Higgins Lake Hydrologic Evaluation Study (2012-14)

- Noble stated Dave Hyndman (MSU) and Mike Wiley (UM) are conducting a hydrologic assessment of Higgins Lake (that includes impacts on the Cut River and Houghton Lake) and the study is supposed to wrap up this year. There’s discussion to take out the small lake control structure (dam) and the researchers are trying to provide scientific information to inform the discussion.
- O’Neal stated some lakefront owners were concerned with erosion and want to know why they need a dam; other lakefront owners want to keep the dam.

Maple River Hydrologic Study (2011-2015)

- Noble provided an update indicating it is going to be Spring 2015 to wrap up modeling, with some modeling results available later in 2014.
- Peacock commented that the water does not go down the channel as was intended to and he wants to see MRWA stimulate faster completion of the research.
- Noble commented that we are waiting for the report (study) to be finished, which is being done for free.
- Peacock wants the committee to work with the Muskegon County Road Commission to fix existing (problematic) culverts.
- Koches stated that the Muskegon County Road Commission could go out and tour the culverts on Maple Island Road.

- ii. Road / Stream Crossing & Culvert Improvements
 - GIS Barrier Inventory for 2012 – Newaygo Co. completed
 - Noble stated nearly 600 sites were inventoried in Newaygo County and are potential projects, depending on their priority relative to other sites.
 - GIS Barrier Inventory for 2013 – Muskegon Co. partially completed
 - Noble stated 387 sites in Muskegon County have been inventoried so far. There is partial funding for 40 to 50 sites to be done later this spring or early summer.
 - GIS Barrier Inventory for 2014/15 – pending to finish Muskegon Co.
 - Noble stated funding looks promising from HIA and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service for inventory work to wrap up Muskegon County and start in Montcalm and Mecosta Counties during fall 2014.
- iii. Reforestation in High-Priority Sub-basins
 - Large-scale Restoration of High Priority Riparian Areas (GLRI)
 - Noble stated the GLRI grant involves several partners and Muskegon Co. and Newaygo Co. is where most of the work is being done. 420 acres will be reforested by MCD and the grant is being extended for 6 months.
 - Small-scale Tree Planting in High Priority Areas
 - Noble stated there are several sub-basins where this is taking place & we have 1 planned in Grant (Newaygo Co.) for 2014.
- iv. Habitat Improvements
 - Hersey River Habitat Improvement Project (FY 2014)
 - Noble state there is now full funding for this nearly \$30,000 project and MRWA is contracting with Kanouse Outdoor Restoration to install 25-36 woody habitat (fish) structures along Village of Hersey property and neighboring private lands.
- v. Water Quality / Education / Human Health Improvements
 - AIS Boat Washing / Education Program
 - Noble reported on AIS boat washing in the upper watershed with Houghton and Higgins lakes. MRWA acquired additional funds for lower watershed boat washing; the goal is to get a power washer in the lower watershed.
 - Bear Creek/Lake Watershed Implementation II Project (319 Program)
 - Noble stated the project finished on March 31 this year with Best Management Practices (BMP's) installed at the West Michigan Equestrian Center and the 319 management plan for Bear Creek was updated and approved by DEQ & EPA.
 - Houghton Lake E. coli Reduction Project (319 Program)
 - Noble stated this project is ongoing and will finish November 30, 2014 with the creation of the Upper Muskegon River Watershed Management Plan. Roscommon County Road Commission is doing a road end improvement project this year.

New Business

- a. Issues / New Initiatives / New Projects
 - i. Newaygo Sturgeon Rearing Initiative
 - O'Neal stated his management team is preparing/submitting a Lake Sturgeon Management Plan for the Muskegon River. After which, a grant application will be submitted to fund a minimum of five years with MRWA as a partner. GVSU-AWRI is involved in sturgeon research efforts and information from the research is being used in the Management Plan and for a HIA funding application to be submitted by spring 2015.

- b. Project Ideas – brainstorm discussion (continued)
- i. Pursue road/stream crossing improvement project(s) at “priority sites” in Newaygo Co. &/or other counties where inventories are completed–review inventory data for site comparison.
 - Noble stated we will have two counties of completed inventory data that we could look into.
 - O’Neal stated funding should be available if a certain area is selected.
 - Noble inquired if a subcommittee should be formed.
 - O’Neal replied to talk with the County Road Commission or the Drain Commission to see if they have a point person to work with.
 - ii. Continue reforestation / restoration in high-priority sub-basins (from research)
 - Noble stated we know where we want to do the work and asked if there is more reforestation that needs to be done.
 - Auch replied yes there is more acres that need to be done in the lower watershed.
 - iii. Bigelow Creek Habitat (Structure) Maintenance (4)
 - Noble stated the Forest Service (USFS) is looking at accessing/evaluating old structures. Dixie Ward and Jim Cline are going to tour Bigelow Creek existing structures this spring.
 - O’Neal stated that there is a new aquatic habitat grant program that is available statewide and money is available to do some of this work.
 - O’Neal suggested that it would be good to conduct a wood debris inventory of Bigelow Creek to guide future woody structure installations.
 - **Walter will talk with his USFS colleague (Jim Cline) about O’Neal’s comment regarding a wood debris inventory.**
 - Walter indicated that the USFS is in a good position to get environmental planning work done for this proposed Bigelow Creek (4) project area.
 - iv. Other Ideas
 - Johnson stated the Resource Committee should keep pushing the Miller/Nartron dam removal opportunity along.
 - Koches stated he was approached by Newaygo County Drain Commission and thought there may be an opportunity to partner with them.
 - Evans stated the Newaygo and Muskegon County Drain Commissions should get together since they both seem receptive to addressing watershed issues.
 - Evans stated WMSRDC just got selected for funding \$5.5 million of habitat reconstruction. Funding is through the EPA for lower Muskegon River and Muskegon Lake area of concern.
 - Evans stated WMSRDC has a \$7 million project for Bear Creek and Bear Lake.
 - Evans stated WMSRDC has prioritized road/stream crossings in Muskegon County and is developing Hazard Mitigation Plans which may facilitate opportunities for road/stream crossing work in Newaygo and Muskegon Counties. Evans and Noble will convene partners to coordinate and discuss opportunities.

The next Resource Committee meeting will be in Cadillac in the fall. Noble will email committee members to determine the date/time.

The meeting adjourned at 7:05pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Dixie Ward, Project Manager