

**Muskegon River Watershed Assembly
Resource Committee Meeting Minutes
April 28, 2010
Muskegon State Game Area**

MRWA Executive Director Gary Noble convened the meeting at 5:05 p.m. Introductions were given. The following were present:

Wayne Groesbeck, MRWA Ex. Bd. Chair
Nichol DeMol, GVSU-AWRI
Don Snyder, Kalamazoo Chpt. of TU
Rich O'Neal, MDNR-Fisheries Division
Ken Johnson, MRWA Board member

Greg Mund, MRWA Vice-Chair
Chuck Woods, N. Muskegon City Council
Mike Reagan, Bridgeton Twp Supervisor
Gary Noble, MRWA Executive Director
Terry Stilson, MRWA Program Coordinator

Review Agenda

No changes noted.

Approval of Minutes

Mund motioned to approve the April 30, 2009 Resource Committee meeting minutes, as submitted, with Johnson supporting the motion. Motion passed.

Old Business

USFS Sediment Basin Program status – O'Neal stated that he has not heard about this year's sand trap cleaning.

- **Noble will contact USFS Tom Walter to get information.**

MR Mainstem Habitat Evaluation – O'Neal reported that Huron Pines RC&D has completed a habitat evaluation of the entire mainstem of the Muskegon River, assessing different segments on 20% of the entire river to determine habitat from the fisheries perspective. O'Neal has all the data but he hasn't reviewed it yet or written a report about it. This assessment was done because, due to the logging era, less wood fell into the river. This project will help determine what is needed for future restoration projects.

Road/Stream Crossings and Culverts – Noble reported that there will be funding opportunities through the USFWS Fish Passage Program due August/September 2010 and other USFWS programs with anticipated RFPs during October/November 2010. Project items discussed included:

1. **Felch Road (Newaygo County)** – Noble asked if this project is realistic given the prior attempt to rectify and the politics involved.
 - a. O'Neal stated that it is still a priority, and added that the USFWS is drafting a plan on how to address road/stream crossings and will set up a model on how best to use their funding for fish passage. Michigan Tech has developed a road software package that is available to public agencies at no cost. It needs to be updated with the DNRE information and a grant proposal has been submitted to the HIA account for that.
 - b. Mund added that NOAA has some funding that may tie into it.
 - c. **Noble stated that the MRWA will focus on Muskegon and Newaygo Counties where road/stream surveys have been done.**
 - d. Mund inserted unless ownership has changed in the Felch Road area, then this project should just sit.
2. **Maple River/Maple Island (Muskegon/Newaygo Counties)** – Woods distributed a handout:
 - a. 1836 plat map of this area
 - i. Maple River was blocked during the logging area and then culverts blocked by the local government in the 1960s.
 - ii. Maple River has virtually no flow now
 - iii. People would like to see it restored to its prior state

- iv. Currently Maple River is higher than the Muskegon due to sediment
 - v. Wild rice was more abundant prior to the blockage – historical accounts
 - vi. Maple River was once as significant as the Muskegon River
 - b. Mund noted that the Maple River has the southern variety of wild rice and it is almost a threatened species.
 - c. Woods continued that they are looking for financial resources through grants and
 - i. Is appreciative that the MRWA has looked at the Maple River
 - ii. Hopes MRWA will take on this project
 - iii. Hopes MRWA will consider being a partner
 - d. Reagan added that some people are concerned about lowering the Muskegon River while others want it done right away. Reagan feels a feasibility study needs to take place first.
 - e. Noble added that he would like to see a hydrology study done first.
 - f. Woods added that FTCH is reviewing this idea.
 - g. Mund asked what the benefit of this project would be if there is a tradeoff of erosion. Woods responded:
 - i. People along the Maple River remember the good fishing that river had.
 - ii. Maple River is now a mosquito trap
 - iii. Maple River will look better esthetically
 - iv. People have lost a lot of land along the Muskegon River due to erosion.
 - h. Noble stated he would ask the (Muskegon River) researchers if their modeling could tell what would happen if this took place.**
 - i. Mund asked why the road commission doesn't clean the culverts out.
 - j. DeMol responded that the road commission didn't say there were culverts there.
 - k. Noble will talk with Mike Wiley (UofM) and see if the research modeling would give any clues.**
- 3. 40th Ave. over Bigelow Creek (Newaygo County) –** O'Neal said this is a priority but it's not Bigelow Creek but a feeder stream (unnamed tributary) that flows into Twin Wood Lake.
- 4. Prioritize perched culverts –** Noble asked if this should be done in Newaygo County or all watershed counties.
 - a. O'Neal responded that when the new database is completed, we could do it for the entire watershed, but there is no need to wait for that because there are many culverts that need to be looked at. The USFWS will look at how much stream is opened up in their evaluation of grant proposals.
 - b. DeMol added that Newaygo County is prioritized according to habitat in the road/stream crossing survey GVSU completed. GVSU gave the program to the County to keep it updated but she did not know if they have.
 - c. Noble stated that the MRWA will then focus on Newaygo County.**
 - d. Mund added that every county needed to be canvassed to see what road/stream crossing information they have.**
- 5. Bridgeton Township Boat Launch Renovation Plans –** Reagan reported:
 - a. Their DNRE (Natural Resource Trust Fund) proposal is one of 140 that will be reviewed.
 - b. Formed a coalition to police the river and are getting support from Muskegon County.
 - c. Coalition will also be concerned with accessibility issues and with handicapped access to the River.
 - d. If funded, the grant will supply access to handicapped citizens wishing to use the river.
 - e. WMSRDC will facilitate the coalition on May 13 to bring groups together to form a steering committee. It will have representatives from all the governments on the river in Newaygo and Muskegon Counties. The Steering Committee will look at drafting resolutions.
 - f. Woods said there will be a demonstration of the (accessibility apparatus) in Newaygo on May 22.

Ongoing Project/Opportunities/Activities – distributed earlier. Stilson gave additional education aspects that she has been involved with:

- A MiCorps grant was submitted in 2010 by the MRWA to monitor the Hersey River through a sub-contractor.

- There was a cleanup in Big Rapids in 2009 and one will be held in Holton in spring 2010.
- In 2009, she worked with Camp Newaygo to install a rain garden.
- In 2009, she designed two signs and worked with the City of Fremont to have them installed along their trailways.
- In 2009 and 2010, she conducted water fairs for Tri County Schools (Montcalm County), Twin Lake Elementary (Muskegon County) and Camp Newaygo (Newaygo County).
- She is also working with FSU through their Academic Service Learning Community Partners program to connect the community with student-led projects.

New Business/Initiatives

Education Related – Noble reported that the third Teacher Training will be held at Camp Newaygo on May 4 with 45 educators currently registered.

Muskegon Watershed Research Partnership (MWRP) Findings – Noble reiterated the proposal, “Reducing Sprawl and Adding Forests to Lessen Development Effects,” that was submitted to the GLRI:

- 2-year project to reduce urban sprawl and add forests to lessen effects of development
- Based on research that identified high priority sub-basins (in MRW)
 - Reforest up to 400 acres that are not currently forested
 - For long-term health (research determined), the best thing to do is work with communities to reduce urban sprawl and by reforestation
- Muskegon River Watershed Management Plan identified critical areas and there is some overlap with the research findings. MRWA wants to find a way to mesh the two together.
- Project will focus on implementing research results in the lower 1/3 of watershed – Muskegon and Newaygo Counties – and work in five sub-basins:
 - Penoyer Creek (Newaygo County)
 - Four Mile Creek (Newaygo County)
 - Minnie Creek (Newaygo County)
 - Cedar Creek (Newaygo and Muskegon Counties)
 - Muskegon Lake/River (Muskegon County)
- Also includes the development of action plans for the lower, middle and upper watershed but implementation will only be done in the lower watershed.
- Will also conduct master plan/ordinance review in two communities
- Will enroll private landowners with existing forests for plans to conserve 100 acres of forest
- Will incorporate climate change adaptive management strategies; perform functional wetlands planning; and education/outreach in lower watershed.
- Other GLRI proposals:
 - UofM – “Great Lakes Restoration by Land Management; Prioritization and Action” – MRWA will partner
 - MSU – “Applying Models and Geospatial Tools for Watershed Protection” – MRWA will partner
 - GVSU-AWRI – “Use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to Monitor Nearshore Habitat”
- GLRI grant award announcements are expected soon.

Other

Sturgeon Research – O’Neal noted that 30 adult sturgeon were collected in the Muskegon River by DNRE. Most were females over 100 pounds. This is quite significant. The DNRE has just completed two years of research and have four more years remaining.

The next Resource Committee meeting will be scheduled as needed.

The meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Stilson
Program Coordinator