



MINUTES
Upper Black River Council
April 6, 2012
Canada Creek Ranch, 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

A meeting of the UBRC took place on Friday, April 6, 2012 at Canada Creek Ranch. Carol Rose, Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. She welcomed everyone and had each person introduce him/herself. Those in attendance included:

Carol Rose, MC ³	Lisha Ramsdell, Huron Pines
Paul Rose, MC ³	Heather Rawlings, USFWS
Dan Meyers, Tip of the Mitt	Nico Tucker, NEMCOG
Richard Bruot, landowner/UBRC board	Mark Hendricks, Au Sable Wtrshd Com'tee
Pete Thomson, landowner/UBRC board	Joe Jarecki, MDNR retired/UBRC board
John Walters, Headwaters TU	Tim Cwalinski, MDNR Fisheries
Tony Dunaske, Guide, educator	Tom Carlson, MDNR retired, UBRC board
Roxanne Merrick, MDEQ	Gloria Woudenberg, Mont. Cons. District

The agenda was approved as presented. The minutes from the September 2011 meeting were approved as presented and accepted into the official record.

Funding and Fund-raising Updates

Montmorency Conservation District - Gloria Woudenberg: Gloria reported that with the grant funding coming from USFWS programs, Huron Pines' Great Lakes Restoration Initiative Grant, Montmorency Conservation District funding, UBRC, Inc. support and private work for Black River Ranch and Canada Creek Ranch, funding for 2012 is more than adequate to cover the cost of a five-person crew again this year.

U.S.F.W.S. – Heather Rawlings: Heather indicated that \$15,000 in Fish Passage funding will be available for 2012.

Huron Pines– Lisha Ramsdell: Lisha reported that in addition to the \$12,500 crew funding coming from Huron Pines' GLRI grant, additional funds have been put in play for the removal of Saunders Dam from National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (\$10,000 plus another \$30,000 from Fish Passage/Partners for Fish and Wildlife and other funding). Heather offered that the Alpena USFWS station now has a "Total Station" surveying device for use on such projects.

UBRC - Carol Rose: Rose reported that the UBRC received some donations over the winter, including one orchestrated through a retired Boeing employees fund. She indicated that there are sufficient funds to help assist with offsetting the cost of additional supervision of the crew this year.

River Restoration Crew Plans for 2012

Crew Composition: It was reported that all but one of the 2011 crew has moved on to other pursuits for the summer of 2012, so this will be a "green" crew this year. Nearly 20 applications for the 2012 positions were received by the MCD, including several from out-of-the-area. It was agreed that a five-person crew would be hired again this year, with the possibility of a sixth individual hired to take care of some special projects for the UBRC. Huron Pines has requested the use of one crew member for a couple of days this summer when the HP Crew Leader is working solo on projects on the Pigeon.

Materials, Equipment needs: Nico Tucker reported that cable and duckbill anchor supplies are good to start with for this year, but more clamps and ferrules should be ordered to complete the season. Gloria said that with the funding we have this year, she'll order more of everything to

get us through 2012 and into 2013. A new Garmin Oregon GPS unit purchased by UBRC was turned over to Nico for use by the crew. This unit combines GPS and camera capabilities and should be a very useful tool for the crew.

New Permit status: The next permit application for the Black is underway and will cover the “gap” between Town Corner Stairs and “the chimney” site at Blue Lakes. Nico said that they still have eight trespass forms to collect from property owners before the permit can be submitted to the DEQ.

Canada Creek Ranch Report

Two to three weeks of work are planned for Canada Creek Ranch in 2012. CCR has \$15,000 set aside to cover crew costs. Heather reported that a woodcock habitat project near the south wire of the ranch was started in 2011.

Black River Ranch

Two to three weeks of work are planned for Black River Ranch in 2012. Their permit expires in May of 2015.

Road/Stream Crossing Projects

Stewart Creek/Blue Lakes Road - Lisha Ramsdell said this project is planned for 2012. The engineering draft has been completed and a late summer or early fall start date is anticipated. To everyone’s delight, she reported that primo Hungerford’s Crawling Water Beetles has been found about 50' downstream from the culvert. The Montmorency County Road Commission will be doing the work, which will involve closing the road for a day or two when the culvert is installed.

Cheboygan County: Several crossings in Cheboygan County have been slated for improvements this year, according to Heather and Lisha. The Bowen’s Road immediately west of Moran Iron Works will be done this year, with the bulk of the funding taken care of by Tom Moran. Others on Mullett Creek, Golke Creek and Milligan Creeks are also on the radar or in preliminary planning. Tim Cwalinski reported that one of the culverts on Milligan is already perching this early in the season.

Saunders Dam: This dam on the Black River is on the Thies parcel recently purchased by the State of Michigan. It’s been identified as a fish passage barrier by both the State, USFWS, HP and others and grants have already been submitted in anticipation of its removal. The beauty of this project is that the \$1,375,000 purchase price can be used as matching funds for grants.

Other sites: Shingle Mill Bridge is still on the wish list and will need some significant funding to make a reality. Heather estimates the cost at \$200 - \$300,000, depending on whether the culvert is replaced with a timber bridge or an improved culvert and road improvements. Matching funds will be key to make this work. It was mentioned that one of the UBRC’s major donors will be in the area this summer and many offers to provide watershed tour opportunities were made.

MDEQ Updates

Roxanne Merrick of the MDEQ’s Water Resources Division informed the council of recent changes in permitting requirements and categories. Specifically, she spoke about the Minor Permit requirements as they pertained to beaver dam removal. She said that if a dam removal

involves dredging, draining or filling, a permit is required. Significant discussion ensued on this topic pertaining to the level of detail required on the permits, how the fees would be figured (i.e. per dam, per river mile, per creek, per watershed, etc.), and turn-around time for securing said permit(s). **NOTE: Subsequent to the meeting, further clarification was provided by DEQ which specified that if a beaver dam is to be removed by hand or by mechanical means which does not disturb the streambed, stream bank or release sediment, NO PERMIT IS REQUIRED.** The normal Forest Treatment Proposal forms still need to be completed, as in the past.

Roxanne further said that for ANY permit applications going to the DEQ, get them in early. Staff reductions and her leave in July will create slow-downs in the review process. She also said that the DEQ is making HELP STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS signs available for free to the general public for installation at access sites and boat launches.

Volunteer Opportunities

Lisha reported that several volunteer outreach opportunities are forthcoming for the Pigeon and Sturgeon River watershed. Details are available on the Huron Pines web site. Additionally, grant funding has also been secured to initiate more activities in the Thunder Bay River watershed. Ten r/s/x have been identified for attention there.

Dan Myers of Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council informed the group of several river-focused volunteer opportunities including stream sampling are on the schedule for this summer. Details are available on the Tip of the Mitt's web site (www.watershedcouncil.org).

TU/Volunteer Work bee on the Black: Scheduled for weekend of August 4 at the Bruot parcel to be included in the new permit. This will allow materials to be staged in advance of the event, reducing the amount of standing around time and increasing productivity. Detail on that to follow.

Sturgeon For Tomorrow Sturgeon Guard time: Visit the Sturgeon for Tomorrow web site for details (www.sturgeonfortomorrow.org).

Other: The 17th Annual River "Summit" of watershed groups from northern Michigan will be held on April 12 in Grayling. Carol Rose will attend on behalf of UBRC, and John Walters will attend on behalf of Headwaters TU. A Friends of Lake Huron Watershed meeting is planned for April 11 at the USFWS office in Alpena.

Temp logger installation time

Tim Cwalinski brought temp loggers to the meeting, ready to deploy. Phil Bandish, Joe Jarecki and Paul and Carol Rose will install them again this year.

Sand Traps

At previous meetings, discussion has taken place regarding the DNR's reallocation of staff formerly involved in maintaining sand traps. Tim reported that there is one trap on public land on the Black, two on public stretches of Canada Creek, plus the one on the East Branch at the Bud Slingerlend/Byron Brown properties. Tim emphasized that sand traps are only useful when they have been thoroughly dug out and regularly maintained. A sub-committee of volunteers was identified (Tim, Tom Carlson, Tony Dunaske and Pete Thomson) to go out and inspect

each trap and determine a course of action. Funding for maintenance, if deemed worthy, is potentially available from USFWS, the private landowners and UBRC.

Beaver Dams

More discussion took place about the presence of beavers and dams within the watershed. Richard Bruot reported that he'd been trapping the Milligan and had already removed a 56 pound male and another in the 30+ pound range. Beaver activity in Milligan Creek is on the rise again and it was agreed that the creek needs to be floated, dams identified by GPS and plans made for their removal. After all of the good management indicated by the recent electroshocking survey results on the Milligan, we cannot afford to let the stream succumb to beavers again.

Other

Paul Rose brought up the proposed changes in the daily creel limit (from 5 to 10/day) for brook trout being put forth by a UP group at the September meeting. The DNR is now seeking input from the general public via an on-line survey open until Mary 26. Visit the following sites for more information on the proposal (www.michigan.gov/fishing), and the survey itself (<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/BrookTroutRegulations>) to share your views.

Partner updates/Issues

Carol Rose shared the news that former UBRC Chair, Bud Slingerlend is to be inducted into the Michigan Environmental Hall of Fame in early May, two days before his 97th birthday. She also reported that he's a finalist in a FIELD AND STREAM magazine conservation grant program which has a \$5,000 cash award AND a pick-up truck for the winner!

John Walters reported that Headwaters TU will be doing their annual Introduction to Fly Fishing event on April 14 at Jo-burg High School. This event is open to both children and adults and teaches all the fundamentals of fly fishing (equipment, knots, casting, etc.). John also mentioned that the Mason-Griffith Chapter of TU, of which Mark Hendricks is President, will be receiving Michigan's TU Chapter of the Year award for the second year in a row in April.

Tim Cwalinski said that they'll be doing surveying on Tower Pond and Milligan Creek again this year, with Tower Pond coming up soon. Roxanne mentioned that there is going to be a draw-down of Tower Pond in the near future.

Paul Rose spoke about increasing concerns about the sustainability of Fisheries Division as retirements and funding cut-backs loom. It was agreed that the Chair of the UBRC would draft a letter addressing this issue to be sent to the DNR Director and other appropriate individuals.

Next meeting - September 14, 2012 was tentatively scheduled for the next full meeting of the Council at CCR.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Moncrieff Rose