



UPPER BLACK RIVER COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - September 8, 2016

The fall meeting of the UBRC took place on Thursday, September 8, 2016 at the Canada Creek Ranch House. The meeting began at 9:30. Those in attendance included:

Carol Rose, UBRC
Tim Cwalinski, MDNR Fisheries
Ross Nave, UBRC
Paul Rose, UBRC
Heather Rawlings, USFWS
Pete Thomson, UBRC/MCCC
Lindsay Adams, USFWS
Eric Johnson, CCR

Dave Turzwski, Black Lake Assoc (BLA)
Lisha Ramsdell, Huron Pines
Ron Dulak, BLA
Phil Bandish, UBRC
Roger Selvig, BLA
Chuck & Nancy Thurston, CCR
Tony Dunaske, Gaylord Fishing Club
Dave Smethurst, PRCA

Carol Rose welcomed those in attendance and introductions were made around the table. The agenda was approved and a brief recap of remaining/anticipated funding for the 2017 season took place.

Work Season Report: Productivity for the 2016 river crew was mixed, hampered by issues related to the crew truck, among others. New structures were installed on the Springs/Hardwood Creek permit, as well as at CCR, while additional maintenance work was done on older structures in the permitted areas. Beaver dams and blow-down blockages throughout the watershed also required the crew's time. Two beaver dams were quite substantial and difficult to get to, requiring assistance from private landowners and a couple of UBRC board members. Some discussion took place regarding the "need" for fill material within the frame of the LWD structures, as much of it is loose and washes downstream during rain events or the spring thaw.

Beaver Dam Club Dam/Volunteer Day Event: Carol Rose reported that just under 25 volunteers participated in this mid-August project. Members of the Vanguard TU chapter made a good showing, along with some local fishermen/guides, riparian owners, DNR Fish Biologist, Tim Cwalinski and UBRC board members. A portion of this enormous dam had already been removed, restoring the flow of the river. During the morning's work, the balance of the dam was substantially removed, with the woody materials floated down the river to be used to augment existing older structures. Drone photos provided before and after the project indicated that the river is flowing smoothly and healing up from the presence of a longtime dam.

Canada Creek Erosion Site Project: Tim Cwalinski reported on the status of the erosion site remediation project on Canada Creek north of the northerly limits of Canada Creek Ranch. The site has been popular with day users as well as deer, bear, trout and grouse camps for years. All of this use resulted in a severely degraded sandy bank, responsible for dumping an estimated 15.5 tons of sand and sediment into the creek each year. Three divisions of the DNR (Forestry, Fisheries, Parks), Huron Pines, the Montmorency County Conservation Club and UBRC were all lined up to assist with the project. A Toe-wood treatment is to be used, involving whole trees and the use of heavy equipment provided by the DNR. A fence around the top of the site is to be constructed by the Montmorency County Conservation Club and seeding/planting is to be done by Huron Pines. Everything was lined up and ready to go within a week or so of the meeting.

Road/Stream Crossings: Lisha Ramsdell report on several RSX projects within the watershed.

These included little McMasters Creek/Clark Bridge Road, Owens Creek/Owens Road, Milligan Creek at Waveland and Brady Roads, and plans for Packer Creek/Rouse Road. She also reminded us that the recently compiled RSX inventory for the Black River has been uploaded to the Northern Michigan Streams web site, www.northernmichiganstreams.org

Temp Loggers: Of the 10 within the watershed, one was lost and one was out of the water for part of the season. Tim said we still have extras for use next year.

UBRC Partner updates:

- Tim Cwalinski mentioned that there are two areas on the Black which have been surveyed since 1975. Electro-shocking is used in each case. He noted that in 1975, brook trout numbers per acre and per mile were very high, especially when compared to the subsequent data collected in 1991 which indicated a marked decline in numbers. This was attributed, in part, to the exploding beaver presence on the river. In turn, the beaver presence also provided the catalyst for the creation of the Upper Black River Watershed Restoration Committee.

Tim also mentioned that the Black Lake Sturgeon Management Plan has been completed, that AMERICAN ANGLER magazine did a story on the Black, and that Tomahawk Flooding's dam is probably due to be replaced within the next 5-10 years.

- Canada Creek Ranch's Eric Johnson and Chuck and Nancy Thurston reported that a number of the southerly structures installed in previous years are failing and require attention. Some discussion ensued and plans were made for a presentation to be made by the UBRC for the benefit of CCR's Board of Directors and Conservation Committee.

- Pete Thomson reported that the plans are in the works for the fence installation at Canada Creek.

- Tony Dunaske reaffirmed his interest to assist the river crew next season as they move downstream near the Gaylord Fishing Club.

- Lisha Ramsdell reported that wild parsnip continues to be an invasive plant of concern within the Pigeon River Country. She also shared information about a Forest Legacy Grant application in the works to be used to acquire the Walled Lake Lodge property adjacent to the PRC. Letters of support were requested for this effort.

- Heather Rawlings reported that the Alpena office of USFWS has a new Fish Passage Coordinator, Matt Kowalski. She further indicated that the Cheboygan River watershed, of which the Black is a part, continues to be a focus for the agency's Fish Passage program.

- The gentlemen from Black Lake Association shared some of the BLA's concerns. These included reduced lake levels, sand deposition issues and the possible removal of the three dams on the Black River. A feasibility study is being done by the U of M re: removal of the dams. Lauren Edson is driving the study and may be reached at umblackriver@umich.edu.

- Ross Nave of Milligan Creek reported that he has trappers lined up again to trap the areas near Milligan.

- Dave Smethurst and Alex Cerviniak asked about whether there's ever been a redds survey on the Upper Black. Tim Cwalinski said that these are difficult to do for brook trout because in many cases, the redds are subtle.

The Spring 2017 meeting will be scheduled via Survey Monkey sometime this winter.

The meeting adjourned at noon, with renewed thanks to Canada Creek Ranch for hosting us again.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Moncrieff Rose, Chair