



UPPER BLACK RIVER COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - September 13, 2019

The spring meeting of the UBRC took place on Friday, at the September 13, 2019 at the Canada Creek Ranch House. The meeting began at 9:30. Those in attendance included:

Carol Rose, UBRC
Tim Cwalinski, MDNR
Gary Isaman, Headwaters TU
Tom Carlson, UBRC/MCCC
Paul Rose, UBRC
Heather Rawlings, USFWS
Tony Dunaske, Gaylord Fishing Club
Ken Reed, Contractor
Howard French, Angler
Brian Marshall, MEGLE
Chuck Thurston, CCR
Paul Fox, MDNR Law Enforcement
Joe Jarecki, UBRC/PRCA

Richard Bruot, UBRC, Riparian owner
Jim Kurbel, Headwaters TU
Roger Bergstedt, Angler
Ross Nave, UBRC
Kim Bandish, Riparian owner
Greg Rekoswki, MDNR - PRC
Pete Thomson, UBRC
Matthew Kowalsi, USFWS
Lance Cottrell, trapper
Nancy Thurston, CCR Board Member
Brian Rogers, CCR Manager
Tom Ames, CCR
Paul Rose, UBRC

The fall wrap-up meeting of the UBRC took place on Friday, September 13, 2019 at the Canada Creek Ranch House. After introductions and approval of the agenda, there was a quick rundown on the funding available for projects in the Black River Watershed for the 2020.

River Work Update: 2019 was another productive season for in-stream habitat enhancement on the Upper Black and Canada Creek. Contractor Ken Reed provided a rundown of what had been accomplished to date in the resource. His season began at Canada Creek Ranch where he completed the remaining waypoints (50+) on the CCR permit in a timely and expeditious manner before the 5 year permit period expired. After the CCR work was completed, he reviewed the status of the structures installed over the previous two years on the Black and did repair/maintenance, as needed. Upon approval of the new UBRC permit (Sparr Road to Tyrolean Hills), Ken and crew immediately went to work, completing 70 structures. This permit area is a particularly difficult stretch of the Black where access is more challenging. There were countless blowdowns suspended just over the river through which an opening was created. Additionally, Ken opened up blockages reported in the watershed.

After Ken's report, Gary Isaman introduced a new system for securing structures into the streambank: a long stake which is augered in. It's a system recently used on the Au Sable.

Drone footage: Brian Marshall of the Michigan Department of Environment, Great Lakes & Energy (EGLE) shared some drone footage of the new permit area shot by a colleague in his office. He extolled how useful drone footage will be in reviewing permits, gauging changes in the river, identifying blockages, beaver activity, etc. Using additional technology, he will be able to overlay drone footage with mapping for additional detail. All were impressed with the possibilities drone footage can provide.

Review of the Resource: Making use of the available projector, photos were shared of the status of some past UBRC projects. Tim Cwalinski showed an “after” photo of the erosion control “toe wood” project on Canada Creek, revealing that the streambank stabilization work was doing what was intended. He also shared before and after photos of the southernmost Rattlesnake Creek spawning riffle, a 2009 project. It was still intact, but aquatic grass had gotten a foothold, as had sand. He and Gary Isaman had the necessary tools to clean out the grass and some of the larger cobble was lifted out of the sand and put right back in place. Big improvement.

Sand traps on public reaches of the Black and Canada Creek were also inspected. The one north of Canada Creek Ranch is still doing what needs to be done and was dubbed the “Brett Farve” sand trap. The one at Slingerlend’s reach on the East Branch will likely need maintenance in 2020, but will be assessed after the RSX at Shinglemill Bridge is completed. A beaver dam or food cache was also sighted along the Slingerlend reach, with additional dams farther on the East Branch.

Beaver Activity: Significant discussion took place regarding the elevated beaver activity within the watershed. In an effort to better manage the resource, Cwalinski requested help from the UBRC and trappers to get a better handle on where the beaver activity is concentrated, where beavers are successfully being trapped and data on how many, gender and GPS coordinates, ideally. In essence, a Beaver Activity Coordination effort. Gary Isaman stepped forward to act as the point person on this and to take this idea back to the folks at Headwaters TU. Those in the trapping community will be contacted for participation in this project.

Shinglemill Bridge: Josh Leisen of Huron Pines reported that the long-awaited work on Shinglemill Bridge should be completed by the end of October, 2019. The existing undersized culvert will be replaced by a 27' x 40' x 6' bottomless arch structure. Working along with USFWS and the Montmorency County Road Commission, all of the work will take place within the public right-of-way on Co. Rd. 622. Great news.

Canada Creek/622 crossing: Matthew Kowalski of USFWS reported on a small project involving the RSX of Canada Creek @ Co. Rd. 622. Stream flow and access have been on-going issues for anglers and riparian owners for years. A small grant has been secured from USFWS with additional funding from the UBRC to pay for title work research to verify just who owns the adjacent parcel(s) upstream of the RSX. Once that’s determined, discussions will occur regarding possible relocation of the coffer dam currently in place and possible changes to the RSX.

Partner updates:

- Angler, Roger Bergstedt is new to the Upper Black and wants to learn more about it. He suggested creating a KMZ file of points of interest/access points on the Black. He was directed to the Navigation Tool on the website to start.
- Comments about the unpredictable nature of the gate at the former Tyrolean Hills were brought up. The State has an access easement for use of this gate and will take it up with the landowners.
- Huron Pines will be doing a big phragmites spraying at Saunders/Johnson Crossing this fall.
- Angler, Tony Dunaske offered high praise for the work the UBRC has done, particularly on the most recent permit area that passes the Gaylord Fishing Club. High praise was offered up for Ken Reed and crew.
- Tom Carlson and Howard French reported that the overall catch during the 2019 Camp Merriment event (which has been going on for close to 80 years!) was the best it’s been in 20 years.

The next meeting of the UBRC will take place in the Spring of 2019 on a date to be determined via a Doodle survey. Our thanks, as always, to Canada Creek Ranch for their continued hospitality.

Respectfully submitted,

CMR

Carol Moncrieff Rose, Chair
Upper Black River Council