



UPPER BLACK RIVER COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - March 30, 2021

The spring planning meeting of the UBRC took place on Tuesday, March 30, 2021 via a Zoom format hosted by Paul Rose, Interim Chair. The meeting began at 9:00. Those participating included:

Paul Rose, Interim Chair, UBRC
Tim Cwalinski, MDNR
Carol Rose, UBRC
Caroline Keson, Tip of the Mitt
Joe Jarecki, UBRC Board
Roger Bergstead, CCR
Dan Blanton, angler

Tom Carlson, UBRC Bd/MCCC
Heather Rawlings, USFWS
Josh Leisen, Huron Pines
Brian Rogers, CCR
Chuck Thurston, CCR
Ken Reed, Contractor
Randy Claramunt, Lake Huron Basin
Coordinator

Paul welcomed everyone and asked those participating to introduce themselves to the rest of the group.

Funding for 2021: Rose (Paul) reported that the UBRC spent what came in for the 2020 year (\$30,000) for in-stream habitat work. This, plus additional maintenance work on Canada Creek for Canada Creek Ranch. Looking to 2021, Heather indicated that the funding level traditionally received by the UBRC should continue. Brian also indicated that there will continue to be maintenance work to be done on Canada Creek. Rose further reported that the UBRC finances are in good shape.

2020 Work Season update: Rose shared a river work review on the current permit (Saunders Dam/Tyrolean Hills) for the 2020 season. Ken and his crew installed 210-220 in-stream structures between permit waypoints SD-20 and TH-2 during the 2020 season. Additional work elsewhere in the watershed included the East Branch Black River access stair and railings at the high-banks area. This work was completed by members of the Montmorency County Conservation Club along with Ken Reed.

CCR: Heather Rawlings reported that she is working with CCR on grouse and woodcock habitat along the creek involving the use of the RGS brushhog for cutting tag alder to open it up. The work was done by Josh Edwards of On-Site Services. She was asked if this would be expanded onto areas of state-owned land, such as along Rattlesnake Creek. Heather replied that the RGS machine is no longer available. Brian Richards said that there is continued maintenance to be done on the creek this summer for Ken to work on.

Road/Stream Crossings: Josh Leisen of Huron Pines reported on the completion of the Shingle Mill Bridge over the East Branch on Co. Rd. 622. The next and possibly, final, RSX project within the Upper Black River watershed may very well be the Black River crossing at Sparr Road, per Leisen. Huron Pines is working on a pre-proposal to National Fish & Wildlife Foundation - Sustain Our Great Lakes (SOGL) program for funding to support replacement of the Sparr Road over Black River and a smaller culvert on nearby Johnson's Crossing Road at a tributary creek. HP has also submitted a proposal to USFWS-NFPP for partial funding for these sites.

For the NFWF-SOGL project, he wanted to touch base and see if there is other logical work (i.e., in the Upper Black River Watershed, meets NFWF-SOGL program goals, is fairly well envisioned or teed-up for restoration but which demonstrably needs additional funding to move forward or fully complete). Bundling some in-stream habitat or riparian habitat work in with the road/stream crossings could be a win-win and make for a really compelling application.

Temperature Loggers: Cwalinski reported that he has the temp loggers and will be getting them set up for deployment at the end of May for installation in early June. Details regarding how to get the loggers to the installers are still being worked out.

Sand Traps: Tim inspected both the Tin Shanty and East Branch sand traps and reported that they will not need maintenance this year. When the time comes, a new permit will need to be secured.

Future In-Stream Habitat Permits: The current permit (Saunders/Tyrolean) will last a few more years. Looking ahead to further permits, some mentioned the East Branch, while others suggested just going back through the earlier permit reaches and doing maintenance throughout.

Partner updates:

- Caroline Keson of Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council shared that TOM has applied for two funding opportunities to support a Black Lake Watershed Advisory Committee and water quality monitoring on both the lake as well as its tributaries. The second application was for funding to develop a watershed management plan which would include identifying nonpoint source pollution. The grants would be from EGLE, if successful. Further, Caroline shared that TOM will be coordinating a Harmful Algal Blooms education and outreach campaign around Black Lake this summer. This, as well as continued stream monitoring on the Black River, reminding all to be mindful of the presence of Hungerford's Crawling Water Beetles (an endangered species) as well as keeping a lookout for New Zealand mud snails (an invasive species).

- Heather Rawlings of USFWS reported that the agency staff continue to work remotely.

- Tim Cwalinski reported that staff is finally getting back to field work, doing lake surveys including Black Lake and Rainy Creek. This, as well as a trout survey along the Gotschalk reach that has been on-going since 1984, as well as Blue lakes and Walled Lake. He also reported that beaver trapping continued through the winter and into spring on the East Branch, Hardwood Creek and Milligan Creek areas. He also reported that LSSU has approached the DNR regarding the possibility to do remote stream monitoring on the Black via solar-powered panels. A wide variety of data can be collected using this system. Details to follow. He also mentioned that the access stair at Clark Bridge needs some attention, suggesting that this might be a good project for the Headwaters TU team.

- Tom Carlson reported that 2021 will mark the 75th year of the Camp Merriment gang along the East Branch Black later this summer.

- Brian Rogers of CCR stated that the Ranch will continue to focus on beaver issues on Canada Creek, as well as maintenance work on older structures.

- Paul Rose reported on the status of a couple of possible private land acquisitions by the State of Michigan within the Upper Black River watershed. One of these is on Rattlesnake Creek, but appears unlikely to be completed. He further reported that Mark Monroe has been named the new Pigeon River Country State Forest Unit Manager.

- Randy Claramunt, the DNR's Lake Huron Basin Coordinator for Fisheries Division reported on the status of cormorants. He indicated that the state has applied to USFWS for a statewide management permit that would allow for both non-lethal harassment, as well as lethal take of up to 10,000.

- Ken Reed was asked about what the occasional weak link is on some of the LWD structures: duckbill anchors or the cable? CABLES, Ken replied!

There being no further business to come before the UBRC, the meeting came to a timely close at 10:21 a.m.

The next meeting of the UBRC in the fall of 2021 will be determined via a Doodle poll or alternate system.

Respectfully submitted,

CMR

Carol Moncrieff Rose
Upper Black River Council