



UPPER BLACK RIVER COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - September 14, 2012

The fall wrap-up meeting of the UBRC took place on Friday, September 14, 2012 in the dining room at Black River Ranch. The meeting began at 9:30. Those in attendance included:

Carol Rose, UBRC
Lisha Ramsdell, Huron Pines
Pete Thomson, UBRC Board
Richard Bruot, UBRC Board
Tom Carlson, UBRC Board
Tim Michiels, Black River Ranch
Paul Rose, MCCC
Tony Dunaske, Fishing guide
Bob Hook, property owner

Heather Rawlings, USFWS
Tim Cwalinski, MDNR Fisheries
Phil Bandish, UBRC Board
Ross Nave, UBRC Board
Elaine Carlson, Mont. Cons. District
Joe Jarecki, UBRC Board
Nico Tucker, NEMCOG
Sam Prentice, Huron Pines

The agenda was approved via motion by Jarecki, second by Dunaske.

Finances: Finances available for 2013 were inventoried. Elaine reported that \$41,000 of the \$56,000 available through the Montmorency Conservation District (MCD) has been expended for the 2012 season to date. An additional \$10,000 remains from the 2011 grant from USFWS. Per Lisha, the GLRI funding from 2011 and 2012 was fully utilized. Additional grant and program funding will be sought through USFWS, Huron Pines and other private and public sources.

Crew Report: Nico Tucker reported that the 5-man, 2012 River Crew installed 216 in-stream LWD structures improving 9,600 lineal feet of the Black River, completing the most recent permit and beginning work under the new permit. Several inactive beaver dams were removed throughout the system, including a number on Milligan Creek. Members of the crew were also shared with Huron Pines for a couple of projects on the Pigeon River. Nico reported that Kyle Maki evolved very quickly into the crew leader for the season and that the crew worked very well together. One of their highlights was the addition of the new portable Capstan winch to their tool inventory, "which they loved," according to Nico. A special thanks was extended to Richard Bruot for the extra time he spent working with the mostly new crew, familiarizing them with the area and working on structures with them.

At Canada Creek Ranch, 35 new structures were installed over 3,500 lineal feet of stream. The CCR permit is good through 2013. At Black River Ranch, 39 structures were completed wrapping up all but the 29 "beetle zone" sites remaining in the 166-site BRR permit. A sand trap on the BRR reach was also mentioned. BRR will work with Tim and Nico in the development of another permit.

For 2013, the crew size will likely be determined by available funding as much as anything. Of the five from 2012, it is expected that only one crew member will be available for 2013. The new permit has also been approved. Called the Springs/Hardwood Creek Permit, 36 sites over 8,915 lineal feet of river will provide up to 322 habitat structures. This permit will close the gap between two previous permits on the Main Branch, picking up where the Beaver Dam Club permit ended and continuing east across the Otsego/Montmorency County line past its confluence with Tubbs Creek and then northeast just south of Town Corner Lake Campground through "the Springs reach." A second segment involves sites on the Main Branch south of its confluence with Hardwood Creek in the Blue Lakes area. Our thanks to Nico for putting together another stellar permit application,

to Tim for his technical input, and to the DEQ's Roxanne Merrick for seeing that this was approved before she left for maternity leave!

Nico looked back on the UBRC crew's productivity over the years which has totaled 953 structures over 8.4 river miles. This doesn't include the dozens of beaver dams removed, old structures restored and miscellaneous erosion control efforts.

Road/Stream Crossing Projects:

- *Stewart Creek:* Lisha reported that the project is officially complete @ a final cost of \$75,000+/- . The Montmorency County Road Commission was an excellent project partner, contributing labor and equipment for the project. It's estimated that the 50 tons of annual sediment load at this RSX will be reduced to about 3 because of this work. Lisha and Heather shared an interesting note regarding the scheduling of the project, which could not interfere with the July mating season of the Hungerford's crawling water beetles present in the stream! How do they know?
- *Gokee Creek/Walker/Osmun Road:* HP/USFWS working on this with Cheboygan County Road Commission
- *Packer Creek:* Working with the Montmorency County Road Commission on this.
- *Co. Rd. 638/Erratt Road in Cheboygan County:* This crossing is on the county line between Cheboygan/PI Counties. The PI County approach to the crossing has been paved but not the Cheboygan side. This would cost \$17,000 that the Cheboygan Co. Road Commission doesn't have.
- *Sturgis Creek:* This is the site where a property owner dropped multiple cedar boughs and limbs into the river.
- *Milligan Creek @ Waveland Road:* This site is a top priority from the MDNR Fisheries standpoint. This was done about ten years ago, improperly, and perched culverts and fish passage are now the issues. This will be an expensive project and matches from various sources will be required to make this work.
- *Shingle Mill Bridge:* This site over the East Branch is always on the wish list of RSX to replace. This will be another substantial project with significant logistical issues.

Saunders Dam: Huron Pines Project Manager Sam Prentice reported on this dam removal project. The final cost estimates are still underway, but \$50,000 has already been secured from USFWS Fish Passage and Partners for Fish and Wildlife programs. The MDNR's Kyle Kruger and Tim Cwalinski have provided significant help with the stream profiling and cross-sections and other survey work. Additional survey work is planned for later this fall. Many other steps need to take place before the draw-down and removal of the old concrete structure and culverts can take place. Sam provided a Huron Pines update sheet on the project and the general consensus is that we're all pretty excited about it.

Sand Trap Report: Carol Rose reported that both the East Branch and Tin Shanty sand traps had been cleaned out in late July and early August by Gordon Ferguson Excavating. The total cost was \$4,680. Contributions to help offset this expense were received by the Vanguard and Headwaters Chapters of TU, totaling \$1,000. Thanks go to Tony Dunaske and Tom and Elaine Carlson for their help in coordinating this work with Gordon and the preliminary prep work and follow-up planting at the work sites. This is a significant expense for the UBRC partners and additional grant funding will be sought for the 2013 and subsequent clean-outs. Two additional sand traps remain on Canada Creek which require erosion control efforts in addition of routine trap maintenance. A permit will need to be secured to address these matters.

Temp Loggers: It's pick-up time for the dozen or so loggers in the system. All were recovered. Data will be made available from Tim. Thanks to Joe Jarecki, Richard Bruot, Phil Bandish and Paul and Carol Rose for their help in placing and recovering these precious little devices.

Volunteer Day Wrap-up: Richard Bruot, Tim and Nico reported that the Vanguard TU/volunteer work bee on the Main Branch went very well this year. Seventeen new structures were installed by the volunteers and crew. Much advance staging and prep work was done by the crew and Richard in an effort to make sure everyone had something to do throughout the day. There was no shortage of work or food, come lunch time. Discussion took place about changing the nature of next year's volunteer day to make it a little more interesting for those participating. After the meeting, a site on the Main Branch which shares frontage with the Gaylord Fishing Club was identified as a great spot for a work bee next year. Details to follow. Thanks go to the crew, Tim, Richard and Dee Bruot, the volunteers from Vanguard Chapter of TU for all their hard work.

Other:

- *Maps for web site:* We're still hoping to improve and add to the maps of the watershed available on our UBRC web site. We frequently receive calls from folks heading to the river to fish who are looking for good access points. It'd be great to have a series of maps with access points for angling, kayaking and general viewing of the river that can be downloaded from the site. After some discussion, it was suggested that we seek permission from the Pigeon River Country State Forest Association to make use of some of their maps on the site to begin with, and perhaps seek assistance from an Americorps member to flesh out the data more completely.
- *Beaver dam issues:* It was reported that there's at least one dam downstream from Saunders dam which may still be active. Further, there are several dams on Milligan Creek that require either trapping this winter and/or removal next year.

UBRC Partner Updates:

- Tim reported on the recent fish survey on *Milligan Creek*. Tony, Carol Rose, Phil Bandish, Ross Nave and Randy (from Nevada) worked on the survey with Tim and Fisheries Tech Supervisor, Pat VanDaele on September 10. Tim reported that the numbers were down significantly from those measured last year and attributed this to a combination of higher water temps and increased fishing pressure.
- Lisha reported that *Huron Pines* is involved with a road/stream crossing projects on the Thunder Bay in Montmorency and Alpena Counties, and over the Sturgeon River at Pauquette Road which will open up about eight miles of river there. HP also had projects at the Sink Hole Lakes and the Pigeon River in the PRCSF.
- *USFWS* - Heather mentioned a new Friends of the Lake Huron Watershed group being formed through USFWS, and a phragmites eradication work bee at Michikiwis Park in Alpena on September 26.
- *Paul Rose* mentioned that the US Farm Bill is due for its five year renewal shortly and encouraged all to contact Congressman Benishek's office to urge his support of this important bill. Many conservation programs and funding for USFWS are at stake here. The number to call is (202) 225-4735.
- *Beaver Dam comments* - Tom Carlson spoke up on behalf of the importance beavers play for creating waterfowl habitat.
- *MCD* - Elaine Carlson reported that the MCD is ready and equipped to oversee administration of the river crew again next year. A new administrator is being sought

to take over for Pam Troy and Gloria Woudenberg and will be in place by the end of the year.

- *MDNR Fisheries* - Tim reported on the latest Fisheries staffing levels here in northeast Michigan and the eastern UP. With the retirement of Fisheries Biologist Steve Sendak, his area of responsibility was divided up between Tim and Neal Godby, leaving two biologists to cover an area that seems like the size of Texas. The size of Fisheries Division has shrunk significantly in the last decade. On other matters, Tim reported that the streamside Black River Sturgeon Hatchery was very successful this year, that liberalization of fishing regulations are being considered for Tower Pond.

The last order of business was scheduling the spring meeting. Friday, April 12 was selected and Black River Ranch offered to host the meeting again. There being no time for further business, the meeting adjourned at noon. Our thanks to Tim and Dorothy Michiels and Black River Ranch for their hospitality.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carol Moncrieff Rose". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Carol Moncrieff Rose, Chair