



UPPER BLACK RIVER COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - September 16, 2022

The spring meeting of the UBRC took place on Friday, September 16, 2022 at Canada Creek Ranch. The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.. Twenty-three individuals were present, including the following:

Paul Rose, Interim Chair, UBRC
Neal Godby, MDNR Fisheries
Carol Rose, UBRC
Brian Rogers, CCR
Dan Blanton, CCR, trapper
Nancy Thurston, CCR
Gary Isaman, Headwaters TU
Carl Sanders, Headwaters TU
Pat Bruzewski, Black River Ranch (BRR)
Joe Jarecki, UBRC
Deb Vendlinski
Paul Mesack, BRR Conservation Committee

Tony Dunaske, Gaylord Fishing Club
Greg Waltz, MITU
Josh Leisen, Huron Pines
Chuck Thurston, CCR
Ken Reed, Contractor
Kim Bandish, UBRC
Brian Rogers, CCR
Pat Mousseau, angler
Kim Bruzewski, Black River Ranch (BRR)
Dan Owen, angler
Heather Rawlings, USFWS

Interim Chair Paul Rose welcomed everyone and asked those participating to introduce themselves to the rest of the group. Mr. Rose stated that there was ample funding for the 2022 season and Heather Rawlings indicated that USFWS will be continuing their funding through the USFWS Fish Passage Program.

2022 Work Season report:

Interim Chair Rose provided a series of slides representing activities within the watershed which included a watershed map identifying current and future permit reaches for in-stream habitat work. The **Blue Lakes fire** was mentioned and noted on the map, covering approximately 2,300 acres. Approximately 2/3 of the affected area was in the westerly reaches of Black River Ranch where the fire jumped both the Main branch and East branch Black River. Fortunately, the landscape has the ability to heal pretty quickly and is greening up well. Kim and Pat Bruzewski, Black River Ranch managers shared that foresters are actively cutting the scorched trees left in the fire's footprint and pulling slash into piles, and that the elk are bugling and have returned to their normal range.

2019 Permit Work: This permit referred to as the 2019 Sparr Road/Tyrolean Hills permit, is substantially complete. Over the course of four years of this 5-year permit, 700+ in-stream habitat structures were installed by Ken Reed and his crew. Access to the northerly reaches of the permit's 3.5 mile riparian corridor have been challenging for the crew. Kudos for Ken and his crew's work were shared. Access from the former Tyrolean Hills remains to be an issue at the state level.

Other Projects: A number of inactive beaver dams have been partially de-constructed, including one along the Slingerlend reach this year. It's worth noting that remnants of Bud's "Sand-Deflector" infrastructure remains on the streambed. Headwaters TU has been a big help on the beaver dam work.

Canada Creek Ranch Report: CCR reported that they've identified numerous beaver dams within the system and look forward to doing some trapping this season with their in-house trapper, Dan Blanton. Nuisance permits have been difficult for them to secure this year from the DNR.

Road/Stream Crossing, Erosion Sites: Interim Chair Rose shared some slides of a recent blow-down of a giant white pine along the highbanks area of the East Branch. This occurred at one of the coveted camping sites along this reach of the East Branch. Ken Reed and Paul Rose took care of clearing out the mighty tree, providing some additional stream stabilization/habitat along the stream bank. River access by campers and anglers at this steep site has resulted in significant erosion and undercutting of the top of the riverbank. A new permit will be sought to repair the erosion at the site, perhaps something like the toe-wood project done by the MDNR/UBRC a few years ago along another popular camping site on Canada Creek. Heather Rawlings indicated that she should be able to secure funding for this project and/or heavy equipment to assist with its repair.

Road Stream Crossings (RSX): Josh Leisen of Huron Pines gave updates on recent/current RSX projects. The RSX on 622 @ the East Branch Black, a/k/a Shingle Mill Bridge was completed in late 2020 and is doing well. The "Tubes" site on the Pigeon River is now complete. Four additional sites are on the list for Black River RSX locations at Sparr, Wilkinson and Beck Roads and Johnson's Crossing involving a tributary of the Black.

Temperature Loggers: All temp loggers have been turned in to Tim Cwalinski and Neal Godby for the 2022 data set. It's worth noting that the temp data for the Black River is the biggest temp data set in Michigan. Remarkably, the temp logger data was downloaded by Tim Cwalinski within a day's time and shared with those interested in this special resource. Our thanks to those who install and remove the temp loggers throughout the system each year.

Beaver activity/Trapping: There has been much beaver activity throughout the year within the watershed. Trapping will ensue when the season begins and Headwaters TU will assist again in identifying dam sites.

Project Permits: In addition to the Highbanks Erosion Site permit previously referenced, plans are underway to develop a new permit to revisit the in-stream habitat sites from the 2012 permit reach.

Partner updates:

- Interim Chair Rose shared the great news that the DNR will be acquiring the 200 acre Wagar parcel where the confluence of Rattlesnake Creek and the East Branch Black is located. This has been a highly prized site for years and will soon become public land.
- MDNR Fisheries Biologist Neal Godby reported that Tim Cwalinski is now the new Fisheries Northern Lake Huron Unit Manager and is looking for a new biologist to take his former position.
- Greg Waltz, MITU shared that MITU is actively opposed to the proposed expansion of Camp Grayling. He mentioned that large trees were installed via helicopter in the Manistee River earlier this month. He also shared that MITU Executive Director Dr. Bryan Burroughs presented to the NRC's Fisheries Committee on concerns about continued Splake stocking on Lake Superior.
- Gary Isaman, Headwaters TU invited folks to participate in macro-invertebrate sampling on the East Branch and Main Branch Black River the Saturday following the meeting.
- Brian Rogers, Manager of Canada Creek Ranch, reported that beaver activity continues to be an

issue in various locations along Canada Creek. Montague Dam is set too low, and has some erosion issues.

-Dan Blanton, CCR trapper, asked if the lower stream levels should be of concern. Neal Godby said that there wasn't a great deal of rain throughout the spring and summer which is often the cause of warmer waters within the stream and increase turbidity. Thankfully, the ground water recharge and the in-stream habitat along the riparian corridor gives brookies a "break" from having to deal with faster, deeper water as they search for food.

- Paul Mousseau, angler from Vanderbilt, shared that he doesn't often fish the Sturgeon which is closer to where he lives, but, instead heads on over to the Upper Black watershed. He's observed more suckers and chubs in the system in the areas where he has historically fished.

- Kim Bandish, UBRC Board member, shared that he'd turned in the Milligan Creek temp loggers.

- Joe Jarecki, UBRC Board member, shared that he'd turned in the Pigeon River temp loggers.

- Josh Leisen, Huron Pines, shared that HP is doing an invasive species inventory along 20 miles of the Black River. He also indicated the RSX estimates for the Sparr Road/Black River project are very high.

- Tony Dunaske of Gaylord Fishing Club stated that the club is very happy with the work done along their frontage on the Main Branch Black and his fishing has been good there! Kudos to Ken and the crew. There was also some discussion regarding the use of a drone to inventory beaver activity within the watershed. Something to consider.

- Heather Rawlings, USFWS, indicated that her agency is working with HP on the Sparr RSX project. She also shared that the agency is involved in a wetland restoration program in the Cheboygan River watershed and that funding will continue for the Upper Black.

- Carol Rose, UBRC Board member, shared that Fisheries Orders coming before the Natural Resources Commission are wrapping up for the year.

There being no further business to come before the UBRC, the meeting came to a timely close at 11:03 a.m. Our thanks go out to CCR for hosting us at their beautiful Ranch House!

The next meeting of the UBRC in the in the Spring of 2023 and will be determined via a Doodle poll or alternate system.

Respectfully submitted,

CMR

Carol Moncrieff Rose
Upper Black River Council