



UPPER BLACK RIVER COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes - April 19, 2023

The spring meeting of the UBRC took place on Wednesday, April 13, 2023 at Canada Creek Ranch. The meeting began at 9:30 a.m.. Twenty-four 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
Ross Nave, UBRC, Milligan Creek
Pat Bruzewski, Black River Ranch (BRR)
Joe Jarecki, UBRC
Heather Rawlings, USFWS
Matt Reilly
Roger Bergstadt

Nick Theisen, Huron Pines
Debra Vendlinski, CCR
Jim Geister
Chuck Thurston, CCR
Ken Reed, Contractor
Kim Bandish, UBRC
Tom Ames, CCR
Kim Bruzewski, Black River Ranch (BRR)
Mike Parrott
Mark Monroe, PRC Unit Manager
Richard Bruot, UBRC
Alleigh Pagels, CCR Biologist

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

Financial Report and Project Funding Updates: Mr. Rose stated that there was ample funding for the 2023 season and Heather Rawlings indicated that USFWS will be continuing their funding through the USFWS Fish Passage Program. Mr. Rose further mentioned that in 2022, the UBRC had adequate funding for the 2022 season and spent most of what was allocated. Included in the expense outlay was the cost of having a drone survey recorded of the East Branch Black River and Canada Creek to identify blockages within the system.

Nick Theisen of Huron Pines presented on the Black River Watershed Wetland inventory. He surveyed from Clark Bridge Road to Black Lake. Currently, the Upper Black has approximately 55,000 acres of wetland. He cited that the loss of wetlands over time is attributable to agricultural use, road development, chemical contamination and excess nutrients. Mr. Theisen stated that the Michigan Natural Features Inventory (MNFI) described the Green Swamp, where the headwaters of the Upper Black are found, as exemplary watersheds. Theisen then listed the road/stream crossings (RSX) coming up for Huron Pines which includes Sparr Road, Johnson's Crossing which will also engage with USFWS and the DNR. Forty such RSX projects have been completed over the last 30 years.

2022-23 Work Season update: Mr. Rose reported that the 2019 Sparr Road/Tyrolean Hills permit has been completed. A new permit application is being submitted to return to the original 2012 permit reach on the Black to revisit each original LWD structure waypoints and enhancements, as needed. A second permit application has been submitted to EGLE for repairing the erosion site on the East Branch Black in the Highbanks area. This permit will address the erosion and sand dispersal into the river, the result of a massive white pine falling into the river and bringing a portion of the streambank with it. The project will be similar to the 2019 "toe wood" treatment used for

repairing a popular access point on Canada Creek. Native plants will be planted on the streambank for soil stabilization to reduce erosion from this site. USFWS will be providing additional funding for this project.

On another positive note, the 200 acre Wagar parcel on Rattlesnake Creek has been acquired by the State of Michigan. This parcel has been a very desirable acquisition for this Brook Trout nursery area in the upper reaches of the East Branch Black River. Mr. Rose also shared some of the drone footage over Rattlesnake Creek, along with Google Earth images of the vast impoundment in that area.

Neal Godby, MDNR Fisheries Biologist has taken the position Tim Cwalinski used to hold, now that Tim was promoted to the Unit Manager position for Northern Lake Huron. Mr. Godby handed out maps of his service area, which also showed the service area of in-coming fisheries biologist, Matt Klungle, who is stepping in to Neal's former service area which includes the Thunder Bay and AuSable River watersheds.

Heather Rawlings, USFWS reported that the Alpena office has a slew of new employees who will be involved with projects associated with fish passage, the culvert program and habitat enhancement.

Mark Monroe, Unit Manager of the Pigeon River Country State Forest reported that they'll be working on three RSX projects on the Pigeon River.

Temperature Loggers: Temp loggers were distributed to those who install them at this time of year. Some of the original versions have failed and are being replaced by a blue-tooth version that is less expensive and more versatile.

Volunteer Opportunities: Mr. Rose reported that Headwaters TU will be holding a macroinvertebrate survey on the East Branch Black River on May 13. Details to follow. In addition, the UBRC may be hosting a work bee later this summer.

Partner updates:

- Kim Bandish of Milligan Creek reported that he's seeing lots of beavers on Milligan Creek, some of which have been trapped.

- Roger Bergstadt of Black Lake Association reported that the lake continues to have issues with algal blooms, possibly due to nutrient inputs.

- Ross Nave of Milligan Creek echoed Kim Bandish's observations of a "monster dam" on the creek.

- Brian Rogers, CCR Manager said that a new culvert installed on Montague Creek is still allowing sand deposition into the stream. Some adjustments are being discussed.

- Alleigh Pagels, CCR Wildlife/Fisheries Biologist introduced herself to the UBRC and looks forward to working with us.

- Tom Carlson, UBRC, reported that the iconic "Camp Merriment" will be resuming for its 76th year. Originally started as WWII was wrapping up, the camp was started by several veterans whose children subsequently joined them, followed by their grandchildren, and great grandchildren and friends. Quite a legacy for so many years on this beautiful river.

- Kim and Pat Bruzewski, Black River Ranch, reported that they have a little bit of logging left involving the charred trees remaining on the westerly side of BRR. These were trees impacted by the 2,500 acre wildfire last spring which included the easterly portion of the Pigeon River Country State Forest.

- Neal Godby, MDNR Fisheries Biologist, indicated that he'd be heading over to the East Branch Black to do some surveys and measurements for completing a permit.

- Richard Bruot, UBRC, said he's trapped quite a few beavers, some upwards of 44 - 50+ pounds!

- Heather Rawlings, USFWS, looks forward to working with Neal Godby and Alleigh Pagels in the coming months.

- Carol Rose, UBRC Board member and Michigan Natural Resources Commissioner, shared that Deer Regulations will be consuming the next several months, along with wildlife nuisance permits.

Before concluding the meeting, Interim Chair Rose took a moment to remember longtime UBRC/Headwaters TU volunteer, Gary Isaman, who passed away earlier this year. He was a wonderful volunteer, generous with his time and devoted to our coldwater fisheries. He was a kind, caring individual and will continue to be missed, as he left his mark on the Upper Black River.

There being no further business to come before the UBRC, the meeting came to a timely close at 11.20 a.m. Our thanks to CCR for hosting us at their beautiful Ranch House!

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

Respectfully submitted,

CMR

Carol Moncrieff Rose
Upper Black River Council