

Upper Black River Watershed Restoration Committee

Minutes from the Meeting of December 7, 2007

ATTENDANCE

Bud Slingerlend (UBRWRC Chairman), Richard Bruot (property owner), Richard Kropf (Pigeon River Country Association & property owner), Tim Michiels (Black River Ranch), Lindsay Kastl (Headwaters Land Conservancy), Dave Smethurst (Headwaters Land Conservancy), Philip Bandish (property owner), Carol Rose (Montmorency County Conservation Club), Eric Nelson (Huron Pines), Nico Tucker (NEMCOG), Tim Cwalinski (MDNR- Fisheries), Andrea Ania (USFWS), Heather Rawlings (USFWS), Valerie Olinik-Damstra (Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council)

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Meeting was called to order by Chairman Bud Slingerlend.

WELCOME/INTRODUCTIONS

Chairman Bud Slingerlend announced he is stepping down as committee chair. Bud nominated Carol Rose of the Montmorency County Conservation Club to replace him as committee chair. The group unanimously agreed. Many thanks and well wishes were given to Bud. We look forward to seeing him still attend future meetings. Welcome Carol!

FINANCIAL REPORT & FUNDRAISING EFFORTS/ UPDATES

The Montmorency Conservation District reported no significant changes in the budget since the last meeting. The committee has about \$3,500 to start with in 2008. 2008 grant funding possibilities include \$3,000 from the Michigan Fly Fishing Association, and \$6,000 from TU Embrace-A-Stream. Tim and Paul submitted a proposal to that TU program. Tim and Paul are also visiting several downstate TU chapters this winter to promote the work on the Upper Black, fundraise, and build relationships. Heather also applied for \$15,000 of USFWS funds for the summer 2008 work crew.

2007 PROJECT UPDATES

Stream Restoration Crew Updates

Accomplishments. Nico and Tim gave an overview of the work accomplished by the 2007 stream restoration crew. The work crew performed 12 beaver dam removals and inventoried several tributaries for additional dam locations. The work crew also performed maintenance activities on the E. Branch of the Black at campsites and other stream side locations. The work crew also worked on the Gottschalk property stream stabilization project. 20 yards of riprap, 12 biologs, and 150 tree revetments (12-15 ft tall) were installed at this site.

Crew Leader. A member of past year's work crews will be hired as crew leader. Travis Elowsky has several years of experience with the work crew and is native to the area. Nico is taking the lead on the search for 1-2 more additional local crew members.

Transportation. Obtaining a work vehicle and auto insurance is still a concern. May need to purchase a truck for crew use. The crew is also in need of a flat-bottomed boat to haul materials on the river. Heather will look for boat at local aluminum recycling center.

Sites for 2008. Permits have been obtained to perform the bridge replacement and large woody debris placement at Canada Creek Ranch. Paul and Tim also came up with a general activity task list for the work crew's other expected duties in 2008 (checking on old sites, new inventories, etc.). Nico and Tim have surveyed sites on the Black R. as potential sites for 2009 and 2010. Sites were surveyed and selected as candidates for LWD and management brush bundle placement. Plan to begin process of permit application for 2009 work and beyond. Discussion was had on the permit application process (How many linear feet covered by one permit? How many permits are needed? What will the costs be if multiple permits are needed?, etc.). Tim will talk with Roxanne Merrick at MDEQ about this.

Beaver Trapping Activity

Phil reported on beaver trapping activity on Milligan Creek. So far this year he has trapped two. Discussion took place on incentives for local beaver trapping. Could local TU offer additional financial incentives to trappers? Ideas included implementing a bounty system or helping trappers by providing them locations to trap. Tim will distribute to the group a copy of the MDNR Black River Beaver Dam Removal Project report for review and we will discuss further in-depth ideas at the next committee meeting.

Other Issues/ Updates

Heather and Tim talked about a Hungerford's crawling water beetle training that will be offered in the spring to learn to ID beetles and habitat. The intention of the training is to help resource managers become better prepared for how to deal with the presence and locations of the beetle when implementing stream restoration work. In addition to this training, Heather is working on developing protocols for restoration projects where the beetle is involved. She plans to develop specific protocols in regards to culvert replacement, bridge replacement, LWD placement, etc.

Heather and Andie also handed out updates on the Saunders Creek/ Gingell Rd. and Mud Creek/ Black River Rd. stream crossing culvert replacements that occurred this summer. Both culverts were replaced to improve fish passage on these streams. Funding has also been applied for to improve crossings on Montague Creek on Canada Creek Ranch.

Eric reported that the Huron Pines Pigeon River Habitat Initiative year-end report is available. He also discussed the Myers Creek Restoration Project, which will be completed next summer. This fall they had to do some emergency repair work to fix the collapsed culvert on the stream. More information on this project can be found at <http://www.huronpines.org/project.php?action=view&projectId=70>.

Valerie reported on the status of adding sites in the Upper Black River watershed to the Watershed Council's Volunteer Stream Monitoring program. She found two teachers

from the Onaway schools that are willing to serve as team leaders. She also suggested checking with members of the Montmorency County Conservation Club to see if there is interest from that group to volunteer. Training, equipment, and macroinvertebrate identification can be provided through this program. Sites on Milligan Creek and Montague Creek were suggested as potential sampling sites. Sampling could begin as early as this spring.

Dave and Lindsay reported on the work of Headwaters Land Conservancy. Conservation easements are in the works with the Stella Maris Club, and are also talking with the Gaylord Fishing Club about conservation easement possibilities. HWLC focus area right now is from Tin Shanty Bridge on the Black River and working their way upstream from there.

Tim reported on the temp loggers. Paul and TU members retrieved 9 of 10 loggers, and 8 of the 9 worked. Temperature data was sent out to the group. We now have data from Tin Shanty Bridge for 3-4 years. Since there are only a few years of data, no long term trends are seen so far, but the data to date shows temps overall have been highly variable. Tim also talked about the sturgeon hatchery on the Black River. The hatchery is being moved to a site near the Kleber Dam, and will be revamped into a state of the art facility. The sturgeon hatchery relocation is part of the dam operator's 30-yr federal permit.

NEXT MEETING

April 4, 2008, 9:30-12:00, Black River Ranch- Ranch House