

FRIENDS OF THE MAPLE RIVER
MEETING MINUTES
December 6, 2006

Present: Dick Abbott, Edward Mikula, Phil Hanses, Chris Fink, Dale and Anita Ladouceur, Mick Rabe, Amy Noren, Joe Smolka, Jack Nutter, Joe Latoff

CALL TO ORDER: Joe Latoff called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: Joe Latoff introduced David Bostick, Wildlife Biologist/bear and furbearer Specialist, MDNR.

PROPOSED AGENDA REVIEW, REVISION AND ADOPTION: Joe Latoff proposed additions to agenda: old business; annual meeting date, IRS letter, and by laws revision. Motion was made to agenda with changes made by Ed Mikula, seconded by Jack Nutter. Motion carried

SPECIAL PRESENTATION, DAVID BOSTICK: "Living in Bear Country". As more black bear reemerge in MI the DNR has a need to heighten public interest and awareness about living with Black bear. Due to excellent habitat and limited draw lottery bear hunting permits issued there are now an estimated 20000 black bear in MI. Most live in the Upper Peninsula, with approximately 2000 in the Lower Peninsula. Mr. Bostick is aware of 5 in Clinton County. In 2007 the DNR will hold public meetings to gather feedback regarding management of the black bear population. Black bear can live 20 years and weigh an average 200#. Cubs are born in late January while the mother is "sleeping". Black bear do not hibernate, but rather sleep during the winter months usually in dens, but some ground nest. They are excellent climbers and are most active at dusk and dawn. They spend time in wetlands or river bottoms for the lush vegetation that accounts for 70-90% of their diets. They are intelligent problem solving animals that can become habituated to humans and their easy food sources of summer bird feeders and non bear proof garbage containers. Black bears have an excellent sense of smell, greater than a human's. When they are reared up on their hind legs it is not an aggressive stance, but an attempt to detect by smell something in their environment.

Most people panic when they see a black bear, although it is more likely that a human would be "struck by lightning twice in the same week as to be attacked by a black bear". People tend to confuse grizzly bears with black bears. It is important to know the difference. There are no grizzlies in MI. Mr. Bostick encourages neighbors to form "NeighBearhood" watch groups in the event of bear problems, and to contact the DNR at www.michigan.gov/dnr. It is extremely important for campers to be bear aware and not leave food stuffs or toiletry items in their tents. David spoke of the dos and don'ts when confronted with a black bear.

Do: Take town bird feeders in summer. These are like candy to bears!
They fatten up in the summer

Clean outdoor grills after using.

Store garbage in bear resistant can.

When in the woods be in small groups and make noise.

Don't: Run, stand your ground, get big and speak in a commanding tone
as if reprimanding a dog.

Relocation of 'nuisance' bears is like moving a house burglar from Lansing to Grand Rapids. Nothing is solved. It is imperative that the food source be removed. If you see a bear call 800-292-7800

Joe Latoff thanked Mr. Bostick for an excellent and highly informative presentation.

MOTION TO APPROVE MINUTES from October 18, 2006 as made by Joe Latoff, seconded by Joe Smolka. Motion carried

COMMITTEE REPORTS

WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE

Phil Hanses reported that no grants for equipment would be pursued at present for river clean up projects.

Jack Nutter reported that there is no movement on the Elsie Dam project at this time.

Joe Latoff reported that the owner of property in Maple Rapids is interested in donating his land to the Village for use as a boat launch. There may be state matching funds available for the project.

Phil Hanses stated that there is MNR monies available for access sites.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Float trips will be scheduled in the spring and fall

The FOTMR is still in need of coordinator to video elders for the oral history project.

Signage project is underway with Gratiot County. Joe Latoff will contact the Gratiot County Foundation for funding.

WATERSHED MONITORING COMMITTEE

Joe Latoff reported that the monitoring plan is taking shape. He reviewed flow chart he had developed and spoke the 30 sub watershed outflow sampling.

The members of the monitoring committee with Megan McMahon, Environmental Quality Analyst, will begin 'training the trainers' with an initial survey of a sub watershed.

OLD BUSINESS

Joe Latoff moved that the annual meeting be held the 3rd Wednesday of May. Jack Nutter moved to approve, Mick Rabe seconded. Motion carried.

IRS sent letter of notification that the application for 501C income tax exemption was received. Decision will be made with in 120 days.

Copies of the By-law revision(s) copies can be reviewed by contacting Kris Foight. Formal vote to approve will occur at annual meeting in May, 2007.

NEW BUSINESS

New website is www.friendsofthemapleriver.org

Next meeting to be held January 17, 2007 in Carson City.

ADJOURN – The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.