



P.O. Box 332
St. Johns, MI 48879

(989) 224-5128

www.friendsofthemapleriver.org

Minutes, January 17, 2007
Rusty Nail Restaurant
Carson City, Michigan

Present:

Joe Latoff, President	Adele Bancroft
Edward Mikula, Vice-President	Kurt Bancroft
Joe Smolka, Treasurer	Jim Ellickson
Kristine Foight, Secretary	Jeff Wadell
Amy Noren	Melissa Eldridge, Ionia Conserv. District
Mick Rabe	Peggy Roth
Gary R. Werner	Phil Hanses, Clinton Co. Drain Comm.
Guinevere Barr, Clinton Conserv. District	Dale Ladouceur
Jim Graham	Anita Ladouceur
Ardith Graham	John Chickering
Steve Law, NRCS Coordinator, Timberland RC&D	Joyce Taylor
Christopher Clampitt	Raymond Taylor
Gary Boersen	Jeff Muirhead
Richard Abbott	Rich Nickols, DNR Conservation Officer

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

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: Joe Latoff read the statement of purpose: To preserve, improve and promote through education, the wise use of the Maple River and the Maple River Watershed.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS: Joe Latoff welcomed everyone to the meeting. All of the guests introduced themselves.

PRESENTATION: Joe Latoff introduced the guest speaker, Rich Nickols, DNR Conservation Officer for Clinton County. Nickols said that he has worked for the DNR for about four years and has been in this position since mid-October. He said he grew up in Clinton County. Nickols said that his territory includes Genesee, Shiawassee, Ingham and Clinton Counties. Nickols said that Dave Rogers is the Conservation officer for Montcalm County and is also covering Ionia County.

Nickols said that the Maple River is a high use area. Activities include fishing, trapping, bird watching, canoeing, kayaking, other recreational use, duck hunting and (illegal) fish snagging. Nickols said that hunters must have permission to hunt on private property, including when floating down a river. Nickols asked that people help be their eyes and call in concerns or illegal activities.

Nickols said that complaints include snagging fish, fishing lines set out overnight (illegal), waterfowl hunters and hunters floating down river. He said trash is pretty self-policing. Nickols said he plans on patrolling frequently. He said he has a kayak and motorized canoe available.

Latoff commented that hunters who don't respect private property of landowners surrounding the state game area and Sleepy Hollow seems to be a big problem. Nickols said that trespass is their most common complaint. Nickols suggested that property owners post their property with signs that are 50 square inches in size. These should be posted in conspicuously at entry points. Nickols said that for trespass complaints, the DNR or county sheriff can be called.

Nickols said that on rivers, you can legally portage around obstructions. He added that wading in the river requires permission because the adjoining property owners own the river bottom. Latoff showed the bulletin "Woody Debris Management Fact Sheet" that was prepared for the Phase 2 stormwater process in the Lansing area. Nickols said that there is no clear guidance on clearing debris. He suggested obtaining the adjoining property owners' permission.

There was a question on the definition of navigable streams. Nickols said that the definition, which came from logging days, is "One that can float a log." Nickols explained that this is at normal high water. He said this is still in the law. He said that determining what is a navigable stream can be a pretty cloudy area. He added that drainage ditches are private property and are non-navigable.

Nickols was asked if trapping was legal in zone 3. He said that it is. He said they are seeing an increase in trapping and noted that fur prices are up. He added that trappers need permission to trap on private property. Smolka asked if they can leave the carcasses behind. Nickols responded that trappers and hunters are to take the carcasses with them. He added that fish are not to be left on the bank, either. Nickols said they have seen gross over-limits of bobcats and otter. Sometimes the whole family will get tags for one actual trapper. He said that they now have kill tags to put on the animals when they are trapped. Latoff asked about bobcats. Nickols said it is rare to see them. He said that it is not legal to trap them around here. (It is legal in the area north of Mt. Pleasant.)

Latoff commented that there are five adult bears in the area and 3 cubs. Nickols noted that the young males wander quite far in the Spring. Latoff said that he received a letter from Bill Morris because of Dave Bostwick's presentation to the Friends of the Maple River. Latoff said the DNR is considering collaring a young male and tracking him. The bear would be named and used as a mascot and educational tool. This would be included in their southern Michigan bear research project. Latoff said that he has found funding to do the project.

Wadell asked if they're seeing any problem with coyote runners. Nickols said not a lot. He added that for foxes, a special license is needed, but not for coyotes. Nickols said where they have problems is when a group of people take off in a pick-up and shoot from the vehicle and trespass.

Latoff said that FMR has a watershed improvement committee that works with private landowners to cleanup junk and old private dumps.

There was a question on wild hogs. Nickols said that Clinton County is one of the hot spots for feral hogs. He said there is an MDA hotline for reporting them. He said that he hasn't seen any himself, but they become a concern because they root up vegetation. He said most are from game farms. Latoff added that some are escaped from farms and are breeding. He added that they become mean.

Peggy Roth, with the MDA Animal Ind. Division said that she works with the feral hog issue. She said that anyone with any legal hunting license may hunt feral hogs. The weapon used must

be appropriate to the license. She said the hogs are Russian, Eurasian, domestic and cross-breeds and they are breeding. She said there is no specified hunting season. She said their goal is to eliminate them, or at least control their numbers. She said they would like to do health testing on those that are killed. Roth said that the largest one killed was over 400 pounds. She said they don't look like domestic pigs, they are dark colored and have coarse hair. She added that no one admits to having lost any from their game ranches.

Latoff thanked Nickols for his presentation.

Latoff encouraged those present to join the Friends of the Maple River. He said he had just purchased a video camera for the Friends of the Maple River and that they are re-printing their brochures.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: It was moved and seconded to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Foight moved to approve the minutes of October 18, 2006 and December 6, 2006. Hanses seconded the motion. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Watershed Improvement Committee: Latoff reported that the committee is chaired by Jack Nutter. He said they do clean-up projects on private property, at the invitation of the property owner. He said volunteers are used. He asked for suggestions for future clean-up sites.

Latoff said that Nutter is also chairing a committee for Duplain Township to look at what the options are for dealing with the Elsie Dam.

Latoff reported that the Watershed Improvement Committee is working on developing a boat ramp and possibly a nature center in Maple Rapids. He said a donor has committed to donating the property. Latoff said they are working with Phil Hanses, Drain Commissioner, the Greenspace Committee, and with Maple Rapids.

Education Committee: Latoff reported that Mick Rabe is the new Chairperson of the committee. Rabe said they are planning on a float trip in the Spring. Latoff added that he has a pontoon boat that can be put in the water and used as a temporary dock at Maple Rapids.

Rabe said they are also working on an oral history project. Latoff said that he did one with Louis Copa who is now in his 90's. He said that he came from Budapest when he was 4 years old. Latoff said that he had stories about muck fires, American Indians, and meeting his wife. Latoff said that he spoke to the Clinton County Historical Society and genealogy group and they are considering partnering on this project. Rabe added that will be developing information brochures, keyed to signs along the river, that tell about historic events and locations. He added that they will be needing volunteers.

Latoff said that they are also working on a signage project to identify the watershed. He said the signs cost fifty dollars each and the Road Commission will put them up at no cost. He said this is a good way to involve the community and added that Rabe could use some assistance. Latoff said that the Friends of the Maple River will be applying to the Gratiot Community Fund to help fund this project.

Monitoring Committee: Amy Noren reported that they are working on a strategic plan. She explained that they are looking at a three-phase approach. The first phase would be simple tests

done by hand. The next phase would be using field equipment. The final phase would make use of remote sensors. Noren said that testing parameter would include-coli, macro-invertebrate sampling, sediment, dissolved oxygen, phosphorous and some background information. Noren said they are looking at testing at the out-flow of sub-watersheds. She explained that at the 12-digit level, there are 30 sub-watersheds.

Noren emphasized the use of partnerships, including other grass-roots organizations. She added that DEQ is going into a monitoring year for the Maple River watershed.

Noren said the next committee meeting was scheduled for January 31st.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Smolka reported that the organization has \$49.52.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Latoff announced that the Friends of the Looking Glass were having their annual meeting on January 31st at 7 pm at the Bengel Center in Bath.

Latoff said that they have received a letter from the IRS regarding their 501c# application. He said there were three things that needed to be clarified. He said it would be sent in within the next few days and he expected it to be approved soon.

Latoff introduced Guinevere Barr. Barr is the new Forester and Conservation Innovations Grant Specialist for the Clinton Conservation District. Barr explained that she is using a web-based computer modeling system called a High Impact Targeting tool (HIT) to help predict sediment loading. She said the purpose of the project is to better target available funds where they will have the most impact. Barr indicated that the goal is to eventually have the HIT tool available for landowners to use. Latoff added that she will also be validating the data.

Latoff said that he is trying to encourage conservation districts to have more employees to work with landowners to control erosion and sedimentation.

Latoff said that the "Friends of the Maple River" has a web site, www.friendsofthemapleriver.org. Latoff said that at this time it is still very basic.

Hanses suggested that future meeting sates and locations be scheduled for the year so people can plan ahead. The following scheduled was proposed:

February 21 – Ovid	July 18 – Maple Rapids
March 21 – Muir	August 15 – Hubbardston
April 18 – Crystal Township	September 19 – Victor Township
May 16 – Annual Mtg – St. Johns	October 17 – Rainbow Lk./Perrinton
June 20 – Duplain Twp. (Elsie)	December 5 - Pewamo

Locations are tentative until specific venues are scheduled.

AWARD PRESENTATION: Joe Latoff presented Mick Rabe, Amy Noren, Joe Smolka and Kristine Foight with Certificates of Appreciation for their contributions to and support of the goals and objectives of the Friends of the Maple River.

ADJOURNMENT: Noren moved to adjourn. Rabe seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 pm.