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Friends of the Maple River  
Minutes of April 18, 2007  
Crystal Township Hall, Crystal, MI

Present:

Joe Latoff, President	Richard Abbott
Ed Mikula, Vice President	D. Apostol
Joe Smolka, Treasurer	Guinevere Barr, Clinton Conserv. Dist.
Kristine Foight, Secretary	Gary Boerson
Amy Noren, Chairperson	John Chickering
Monitoring Committee	Jim Ellickson
Jack Nutter, Chairperson	Gary Fritz, Clinton Conserv. District
Watershed Improvement Committee	Ardy Graham
Mick Rabe, Chairperson	Jim Graham
Education Committee	Anita Ladouceur
Darrin Heckman, Quality Deer Management	Jeff Wadell
Project - Guest Speaker	

Joe Latoff, President, welcomed everyone and **called the meeting to order** at 7:00 pm. He read the Statement of Purpose: To preserve, improve, and promote through education, the wise use of the Maple River and the Maple River Watershed.

**PRESENTATION:** Latoff introduced the guest speaker, Darrin Heckman, Quality Deer Management Project. Heckman showed a map of their deer management program and said it goes from Matherton to the Muir & Lyons area. Dots on the map showed the locations of the approximately forty-five participating property owners. Heckman said they started two years ago, and now have 5,400 acres in the program, and are growing. There is a five member board. Heckman explained that their purpose is to control deer herds, manage the doe to buck ratio and grow bigger bucks. He said they work with a DNR biologist and with the Quality Deer Management Association. He said it is a voluntary program and they have no membership fees. He said that, because of the program, they whole area has tightened up, with people talking with each other. He said there is no pressure to participate. Heckman said they have good momentum and are getting positive feedback from the state and national levels. He said they have two meetings a year and about 150 on their mailing list. He added that friendships are growing and deer management is catching on.

Heckman said that they are concerned about trespassing and poaching. He said they encourage people to post "No Trespassing" signs and landowners along the Maple River will be carrying cameras to photograph concerns. He emphasized that shooting five to six bucks is not ethical hunting. He said they

want to keep people educated and bring people in to add to the credibility. He said their next meeting will be in September.

Jeff Waddell asked about their strategy. Heckman said they use the fifteen inch rule, (the ear width of the buck.) He said year-and-a-half bucks are let go. He noted that they have to estimate. Heckman said they already saw an impact on the number of bucks in late buck season. Gary Boerson asked about State land. Heckman said State land is interspersed through their area and they have no control on State land. Mick Rabe asked if they could go over the limit of three does. Heckman said they could not. Gary Fritz asked if they get a lot of cooperation from the DNR. Heckman said they do.

Latoff thanked Heckman for his presentation. He said that the Friends of the Maple River would like to partner with his group. Latoff added that there is a female bear with two cubs that he'd like to have protected.

**INTRODUCTIONS:** The guests introduced themselves. Gary Fritz, the new Executive Director for the Clinton Conservation District introduced himself. He said he enjoys hunting and the outdoors. He said he expects the Conservation District to continue to participate with the Friends of the Maple River. He invited people to speak with him after the meeting or at the office.

**AGENDA:** Amy Noren moved to approve the agenda as presented. Joe Smolka seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**MINUTES:** Kristine Foight moved to approve the minutes of March 21, 2007. Jack Nutter seconded the motion. Motion carried. It was suggested that the minutes be included with the e-mail notices of meetings and with the mailed notices, when requested.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Joe Smolka, Treasurer, reported that the checking account had a balance of \$535.52. Thirty-nine dollars were given to Joe Latoff for a roll of postage stamps that day, leaving a current balance of \$496.52. He noted that the St. Johns Rotary Club has donated \$250 and would like to be recognized on the next brochure. Smolka said that he is working on getting a kayak donated for a fund-raising raffle, and possibly 2<sup>nd</sup> and third prizes, like fishing tackle. He said Bee Sports doesn't handle kayaks, but could donate some life jackets. A suggestion was made to ask for donations from banks to purchase a kayak. Another suggestion was made that the Maple Rapids Sportsmen's Association might participate. Jack Nutter moved to accept the treasurer's report. Mick Rabe seconded the motion. Motion carried.

**COMMUNICATIONS:** Latoff reported that he sent a letter to Wal-Mart in St. Johns to request a \$1,000 donation.

Latoff said that they have a proposed Memorandum of Understanding from the Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy for a "Maple River Land Conservancy Program." Latoff explained that land conservancy is a mechanism to conserve undeveloped land. He said it provides tax credits to the land owner, as well as assurance that the land will remain undeveloped. Latoff said the Memorandum of Understanding would set up a separate account within the Mid-Michigan Land Conservancy. Joe Smolka moved to proceed with the proposal. Ed Mikula seconded the motion. Latoff added that they want to build in a range of options. Motion carried.

Latoff reported that the Friends of the Maple River has received a copy of the Spring 2007 newsletter of the Maple River Quality Deer Co-Op. He said it is available for anyone who would like to read it.

Latoff reported that he had received a letter from Mrs. Bettys of Shiawassee County who said she was very pleased with the organization. Latoff said her letter and his response were available to look at.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE - Jack Nutter, Chairperson**

Nutter said they are planning a **clean-up for April 21<sup>st</sup>** from 9-1. They will be meeting at the Elsie dam, a mile west of the stop light in Elsie. Anyone interested in participating should call Jack Nutter at 989-862-5541. Nutter said they want to get people with canoes or boats to clean up sections of the river. Nutter added that the water is at a perfect level right now. He said they are hoping for 12-20 people. Nutter said he would like to coordinate the sections that people choose and pick-up will be there to put in or take out. Nutter added that people without canoes can do clean-up at road crossings. A dumpster will be provided by Clinton County; it will be located at the Elsie Dam. Nutter said that if anyone wants to pick up another area, they should let him know so he can have the trash picked up. Nutter said that garbage bags, gloves, boots and water will be provided. He said if anyone is working in an area away from the Elsie Dam, they can use their own trash bags, and the bags would be replaced on a one for one basis. Nutter asked that people bring their cell phones. He said he would give out his cell phone number to participants. Foight was asked to e-mail reminders.

Latoff noted that the **Elsie Dam Project** is still alive, but they are not doing much. He said they are looking at options.

Latoff reported that the **Maple Rapids boat launch** project is moving along nicely. He said they are working with the Greenspace Commission. Latoff said his vision is to have a boat launch, park and a facility, possibly including canoe and kayak rentals.

Latoff said the Greenspace Commission is also working on a **new launch site** about four miles east of 127.

### **EDUCATION COMMITTEE - Mick Rabe, Chairperson**

Rabe said he has received information and brochures on **Heritage Water Trails** from Jean Bewersdorff. Latoff explained that for a Heritage Water Trail, the area is researched; including historic events and sites, geology, geography, etc. and then a self-guided tour is developed. Jim Ellickson moved to approve joining the National Heritage Water Trails. The motion was seconded by Jack Nutter. Motion carried.

Rabe said the **signage project** is still in the works, but they could use some help.

Rabe said the **Oral History Project** is still in process. He said he will make a presentation when he has enough responses.

**Float Trip** – Jim Ellickson and Fred are working on the plans. They will be floating the course from Blair Road to Maple Rapids on May 26<sup>th</sup> to preview it and they'd like to put together a good map. It looks like the landing area in Maple Rapids won't be a problem. They will need three to four vehicles from 9 to noon to shuttle people. Phil Hanses is working on getting ball caps. They are planning on having hot dogs and a social time at the end. An article has been prepared on the float trip. They'd like to have an article announcing the float trip and then a second article with more detail. Latoff said the trip took him four and a half hours. People will need to provide their own canoes. The float trip will be on June 9<sup>th</sup>.

Brewbaker has extended liability insurance for the Friends of the Maple River for another year, as a donation. Darrin Heckman asked if there were any plans for downstream of Maple Rapids. He was told there weren't any at this time. Latoff asked if he'd like to organize a Fall trip and he agreed.

Latoff added that the Clinton Conservation District had applied for a 319 planning grant that would include an inventory of the watershed. Heckman said that the GM job bank helped with the Stony Creek. He added that he lived on the Stony Creek and was a member of the Stony Creek Conservation Association. Latoff said that he met with the Stony creek Conservation Association and they had agreed to work together.

### **MONITORING COMMITTEE, Amy Noren, Chairperson**

Latoff reported that the monitoring plan is on disk now. He said they have received review and comment from major State agencies and the USGS. He explained that the plan includes three phases. Phase one is habitat assessment, macro-invertebrates and other simple assessments at the watershed outflow. Phase two would use field equipment at the outflows of the five major sub-watersheds. Phase three would have thirty remote sensing units at the outflows of sub-watersheds. They would provide research and education venues. The cost would be \$10,000 per unit. Latoff said he has several organizations that are interested. Latoff explained that there will be a written partnership agreement with penalties if the agreement is broken. The Institute of Water Research is cooperating to develop monitoring procedures.

Noren reported on some upcoming training opportunities. April 28<sup>th</sup>, MiMEAC will be doing macro-invertebrate sampling of the Sycamore Creek in Lansing. June 16<sup>th</sup>, MiCorps has grantee training at CMU in Mt. Pleasant. Noren said they are hoping to survey their primary monitoring site with Megan McMahon of DEQ on April 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **OLD BUSINESS**

#### **CURRENT OPERATING AND SUPPORTED PROJECTS**

Institute of Water Research – Sediment Prediction Computer Model - Guinevere Barr briefly explained the Conservation Innovations Grant project she is working on. Barr said they have a meeting scheduled in a week and they will be developing procedures for ground-truthing the model.

Watershed Basin Grant Application - Latoff reported that a grant has been applied for that would help pay for watershed signs and educational materials. Timberland Resource and Development Council assisted with the application.

#### **CONCEPTS UNDER DEVELOPMENT**

Friends of the Maple River Endowment Fund Concept – Latoff said that he has been researching with banks and companies to provide funding to establish an endowment fund that would provide on-going funding for the organization. He said he is gathering more information.

Watershed Forestry Project – Latoff said he has been working with Barr on this concept.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

#### **NEW FRIENDS OF THE MAPLE RIVER DISPLAY – Ed Mikula, Vice President**

Latoff explained that they have been going through a series of presentations, starting with geology, geography, climate, soils and life. He noted that he would try to reschedule the presentation on climate. He thanked Mikula for putting together a display board for the organization, which was on display at the meeting.

A suggestion was made to incorporate a social period at the meetings. After some discussion, it was decided to have a social period at 6:30 pm with the meeting to begin at 7 pm, with participants bringing their own snacks.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

Jim Ellickson reported that Big Tree information is available. Latoff suggested having a list for the Maple River Watershed. He said one tree, a pussy willow, is on the national list. There was an article in September looking for people to check “big trees” that are on the list. Heckman suggested that Randy Fedewa might be interested in a “Big Tree” project.

Latoff announced that the May meeting will be the Annual Meeting. He said it would be at the courthouse in St. Johns. Latoff said he would like to see a good turn-out and asked everyone to spread the word. He said the election of officers would be held and there would be at least one vacancy for Secretary. Latoff asked anyone interested in being secretary to contact him.

**ADJOURNMENT** – Mikula moved to adjourn the meeting. Nutter seconded the motion. Latoff adjourned the meeting.