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Friends of the Maple River
Minutes of May 16, 2007 – Annual Meeting
Clinton County Courthouse, St. Johns, MI

Present:

Joe Latoff, President

Ed Mikula, Vice President

Joe Smolka, Treasurer

Kristine Foight, Secretary

Jeff Andresen, MSU, Guest Speaker

Guinevere Barr

Gary Boerson

L. E. Ely

Harold Green

Rebecca Hagerman

Phil Hanses, Clinton Co. Drain Comm.

Fred Olmsted

Peter Ondrus

David Smith

Jody Smith

Toni Tanney

Joe Thelen

Joe Latoff, President, welcomed everyone and **called the meeting to order** at 7:03 pm. He asked everyone in attendance to **introduce themselves**. 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. He then read the **mission statement** that was written by Ed Mikula: “All life is part of our earth’s complex ecosystem. People share space on this planet with all other forms of life (flora and fauna) and we interact with this planet’s air, water, soils and minerals. It is in our best interest to promote and support a healthy and sustainable environment. The Maple River and its watershed is a cohesive unit that reflects our behavior and actions relative to its survival. Everyone needs to make a commitment to promote the wise use of the Maple River and its watershed.

AGENDA: Phil Hanses moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ed Mikula seconded the motion. Motion carried.

MINUTES: Kristine Foight moved to approve the minutes of April 18, 2007. Ed Mikula seconded the motion. Motion carried. Latoff thanked Foight for her service as Secretary.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Latoff reported that there was approximately \$400 in the checking account. He also reported that Joe Smolka is working on getting a kayak donated by Gander Mountain.

EDUCATION/INFORMATION PROGRAM: Latoff introduced the guest speaker, Jeff Andresen, MSU Department of Geography. His topic was “Is Climate Changing? Some Thoughts and Projections.” Andresen commented that the last few years have been unprecedented, in terms of interest and publicity. Andresen said there have been very significant climate changes going back millions of years. He said

there is no reason to expect it won't happen in the future. He added that climate is relatively stable over a human lifetime.

Andresen said that the IPCC is a scientific organization sponsored by the United Nations. He said they have been trying to determine if climate is changing and whether or not human activity has anything to do with it. He said their fourth report will be coming out soon. They have concluded that, "Warming of the climate is unequivocal." Andresen said that ten years ago, it was still debated. He added that most of the observed increase in globally average temperatures is very likely due to anthropogenic greenhouse concentrations. Andresen said a one to four degree Centigrade increase in temperatures is projected by the year 2100. He explained that this is a very rapid change for the system.

Andresen explained the "greenhouse effect." He explained that the earth is a different place because it has an atmosphere. The atmosphere allows some of the sun's energy, (about two-thirds,) to reach the earth; and radiates some out. He said that without the atmosphere, the earth would be fifty degrees Centigrade colder and would not be hospitable to life. Increased carbon dioxide decreases the amount of energy that escapes out of the atmosphere.

Joe Smolka arrived.

Andresen showed a series of graphs. Over 350,000 years of history, there has been a high correlation between temperature and carbon dioxide. Andresen described it as being in "lock step." He explained that ice cores in Antarctica were used to develop the data. He said there have been periodic changes, with rapid increases in temperature, then gradual dropping over a range of sixteen degrees Centigrade.

Looking at the last thousand years, Andresen said there has been an abrupt increase in temperature over the one hundred to one hundred fifty years. Andresen said that looking at global near-surface temperatures from 1850 – 2006, relative to the 1961-1990 mean temperature. (Andresen explained that thirty-year periods are used to determine the "normal" temperatures.) He said temperatures rose around 1940 and then dropped back down. He said there has undoubtedly been a trend to higher temperatures since the 1980's. Andresen showed a graph of Michigan temperature changes. He said that winter temperatures and night temperatures show the trend more clearly. He said there has been virtually no change in summer temperatures.

Andresen showed a graph on Michigan precipitation from 1895-2006. He said the 1930's were the driest period on record. He said rainfall peaked in the 1990's then dropped back, but it is still wetter than it has been in the past. He explained that the increase has been due to more days of precipitation, rather than bigger rain events. He said that one of three days has precipitation and this is a strong increase over the past. He said there has also been increased cloudiness. He noted that snowfall trends have been flat, or falling off over the last couple of decades, (except for lake-effect snow which is very variable.)

Andresen said data suggests that the Great Lakes are getting warmer and having less ice-cover. He explained that the ice cover protects the water from evaporation, and the reduced ice cover is affecting the water level in the lakes. He said the temperature of the Great Lakes has an impact on Michigan climate. He noted that Michigan sour cherries are reaching stage two of budding ("side green") seven to ten days earlier than thirty years ago. This can cause problems when they reach this stage and then the weather goes below freezing again.

Latoff asked about geo-thermal energy. Andresen said that geo-thermal energy is very tiny globally, and he doesn't know if it's changing.

Andresen mentioned the Global Climate Model (GCM). He explained that it is a mathematical model that has been used for about thirty years. He said it has continued to improve over time. The GCM is being used to look at the question of global temperature changes and whether they are a result of natural variability or anthropogenic signal from 1900 to 2000. Models of global and continental temperature changes are compared to actual temperature changes. Especially over the last fifty to seventy-five years, the model shows the changes are not due to natural variability, and therefore they are due to human activity.

Andresen explained that Carbon Dioxide and methane, along with other substances are radiative forcing components. He said there are also some substances that have a cooling effect on the atmosphere. Andresen added that if emissions were frozen at the year 2000 level, there would still be an increase in temperature. The more we can control our emissions, the slower the change would be. Andresen said that a 5-8 degree centigrade increase in temperature is predicted for Michigan by the end of the century, with wetter conditions, particularly winter rain. He said the changes would be less in warmer areas of the world.

Andresen showed a map and explained the Great Ocean Conveyor Belt, a system of ocean currents. He said excess heat is transferred pole-ward by the oceans. Europe is warmed by these currents. Andresen said that when the climate model is run for a 500 year period, after 250-300 years, the temperatures dropped down again. The ocean currents shift, leading to more snow and reflected energy, and another ice age. He described the currents as a "wild card."

Andresen said that strategies for dealing with climate change include adaptation to the new conditions, mitigation and geo-engineering. Andresen said that mitigation would be expensive initially, but may be more cost-effective long term. Andresen noted that Kyoto is pretty much dead, politically. Geo-engineering includes approaches for the collection and storage of carbon and manipulation of the global energy balance; such as volcanoes naturally cool the earth, atmospheric aerosols, a space mirror to block 1% of solar energy and reflective balloons.

In summary, Andresen said that there has been a .8 degree centigrade global average temperature increase since 1850. He said the temperature of the Great Lakes region has risen, but it is still within the range of historic variability. Andresen said that Greenland has been able to support agriculture for the first time in a thousand years. Andresen said that the rate of increase in temperature is higher and stronger than anything seen in a long time. Andresen said that the United States produces 25% of greenhouse gases.

Latoff thanked Andresen for his presentation.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Smolka reported that the balance is \$446.52. He said there is an upcoming expense of approximately \$100 for plat books.

Smolka said that it was suggested to get small donations to purchase prizes for the raffle. He said they need to get a license and need to have the value of prizes before applying. He said that Gander Mountain was receptive to cooperating and at a minimum would provide a canoe or kayak at cost. He said they would want to be listed in the PR. Smolka said the cost would be \$500-1,000 for a one-person kayak.

He said he could use advice on types of canoes and kayaks. Smolka said that. Realistically, late summer would be the earliest they could hold the raffle.

COMMUNICATIONS: Latoff reported that Anita Ladouceur has volunteered to work on the web page development and management.

Latoff thanked Ed Mikula for handling news articles and developing a display board. Mikula suggested adding the Lansing State Journal for news releases.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

WATERSHED IMPROVEMENT COMMITTEE - Jack Nutter, Chairperson

Phil Hanses reported that they did not have the turn-out they had hoped for, for the **clean-up project on April 21st**. He said they learned some things, and in the future, two canoes should work together. Hanses said there were some people who worked in the Hubbardston area on their own. Hanses said they picked up quite a bit of trash; including tires, pop bottles, and a propane tank. Joe Thelen added that he used a kayak to pick up trash up and downstream.

Latoff noted that the **Elsie Dam Project** is still alive, but there is not a lot of activity. He said there is increasing interest and the Friends of the Maple River continue to support Duplain Township's efforts.

Latoff reported that the **Maple Rapids boat launch** project is moving along nicely. He said A. J. Underwood is coming from California and will participate in the float trip on June 9th. Latoff said he is working with him regarding the donation of land for the launch site.

Latoff said the Greenspace Commission is also working on a **new launch site** at St. Clair and French Roads.

MONITORING COMMITTEE, Amy Noren, Chairperson

Gary Boerson said the committee meets monthly. He said they have been trying to meet with a representative of DEQ. He reported that Amy Noren did some training with Megan McMahon of DEQ. He said they are planning on getting the committee together for training in June. Latoff added that a monitoring plan is under development. He explained that it has short, mid-term and long term elements. He said that he met with Jon Bartholic of the Institute of Water Research at MSU about the long-term element to develop a science advisory board. He said that they can assist with recommending specific tests, procedures and equipment, so that he can develop a budget.

Latoff said that Phase 1 would be one site. Phase 2 would be at the out-flows of the 5 sub-watersheds. Latoff explained that the second phase would include use of field equipment as it can be afforded. The last phase would be for all 30 sub-watersheds and would use remote sensors that would operate 24:7. Latoff explained that the Friends of the Maple River would own the system and legal agreements have been drafted. He said he has spoken with universities and corporations and they could have six units right now. He said the Friends would control the data for purposes of watershed improvement. Latoff said there would be a \$10,000 per participant license to utilize the data. He explained that they are working through the budget methodically to get the budget together. He said the strategy is to have the Maple River Watershed be a research and education venue unequalled anywhere. Latoff said that this approach will show how things really work and identify problems. Resources could be accessed through partners interested in the watershed. He added that it's a complete strategy with a strategic set of goals. He said

that the approach is to go slow, be thorough, and get it right the first time. He noted that an application has been submitted by the Clinton Conservation District for a 319 watershed management planning grant that could run parallel with the monitoring through the plan. He said that it would be September before grants are awarded.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - Mick Rabe, Chairperson

Latoff reported that the Spring Float trip will be on June 9th. Jim Ellickson and Fred Olmstead are co-project directors. The float trip will go from Blair Road to Maple Rapids; people can also float shorter sections. They are planning on having hot dogs and a social time at the end.

Latoff said that Darrin Heckman is the project director for a Fall trip from Maple Rapids downstream.

Latoff said that they are waiting to hear the results of a grant application for the signage project. Signs would be used to alert people that they are entering the watershed. He said the Clinton County Road Commission has agreed to provide posts and install the signs. Latoff added that he thinks the other counties will do the same.

Latoff reported that the "Friends of the Maple River" has joined the Heritage Water trails Alliance. He pointed out that there was literature available at the meeting.

Latoff reported that the Education Committee is also working on an oral history project, collecting stories and remembrances of older folks.

OLD BUSINESS

CURRENT OPERATING AND SUPPORTED PROJECTS

Institute of Water Research – Sediment Prediction Computer Model – Latoff said that Guinevere Barr has been the local person working on the project. Jon Bartholic explained that the project uses a computer model to identify areas of high risk for sedimentation. He said that the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service is funding the grant to the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and the Institute of Water Research is a subcontractor. Bartholic noted that sedimentation is the biggest problem in the Maple River.

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

YEAR IN REVIEW

Latoff said that a lot has happened in the past year. He said that the Friends now have 501(c) (3) status, have a checking account and are looking into fund-raising and establishing an endowment fund. Latoff said that membership is growing all the time. He said there is a web site and e-mail. He added that the Friends need a new secretary.

A lot of alliances and partnerships that the Friends didn't have a year ago have been established. Latoff said he speaks at all kinds of groups. Latoff said they try to support the Friends of the Looking Glass.

Latoff reported that he has worked to establish a land conservancy program for the Maple River Watershed. The Friends support forest stewardship and the development of forest management plans

and woodlot best management practices. Latoff said he is looking at running a biggest tree program for the watershed, and noted that the biggest magnolia tree in the state was just across the street.

Latoff reported that Mikula has done a wonderful job doing public relations. He has articles published regularly, he prepared a lovely display, and handles the award program.

Other projects include: the oral history project, the Spring and Fall float trips, a navigational guide, the black bear project. Latoff explained that the DNR will be putting a collar on a young adult male. He has been named "Clinton" and the project will be used as an educational tool. Other projects are the heritage Water Trail, Clean-up project, Elsie Dam project, collaborating with the Greenspace Commission and the monitoring program.

Latoff concluded the "Friends of the Maple River" has come a long way in one year. He said that the organization has a focal point for everyone. He said the group can take a lot of pride in what has been accomplished.

NEW BUSINESS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Ed Mikula moved to nominate Joe Latoff for President. Phil Hanses seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. Motion carried to elect Joe Latoff as President.

Toni Tanney moved to nominate Ed Mikula for Vice-President. Joe Smolka seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. Motion carried to elect Ed Mikula as Vice-President.

There were no nominations for secretary. Foight offered to do the minutes for the Annual Meeting and to send out notices for the June meeting.

Phil Hanses moved to nominate Joe Smolka for Treasurer. Ed Mikula seconded the motion. There were no other nominations. Motion carried to elect Joe Smolka as Treasurer.

ADOPTION OF REGULAR MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETING SCHEDULE

Hanses moved to set the regular monthly membership meetings for the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm, except for November and December. Gary Boerson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

Peter Ondrus voiced his concern that the DEQ need to enforce regulations at large (and small) livestock farms. He added that the Maple River is being polluted by large dairy operations. Latoff said that farmers from the Netherlands have moved to Michigan because they were forced to stop farming because of the high water tables. He added that they looked for locations with as little regulation as possible. Latoff said they support the Farm Bureau. He said the Right to Farm Bill protects farmers against the public interest.

Latoff said that he does not want this organization to be seen as radical in either direction. He said its purpose is for education and cooperation. Latoff said the organization needs facts, data and monitoring information. He said he doesn't want the organization to appear reactionary or unprepared. Latoff suggested putting together an article that includes information on how to report problems. He suggested that the article take an educational, moderate, factual approach. Bartholic said that a lot of farmers are trying to do a good job. He added that farmers don't like it when other farmers don't follow the rules.

ADJOURNMENT – Hanses moved to adjourn the meeting. Mikula seconded the motion. Latoff adjourned the meeting at 9:25 pm.